

# YEARS OF DESTINY

INDIA 1926-1932

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY  
LORD IRWIN OF KIRBY, K.G.

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## FOREWORD

THE problem of India is at present somewhat overshadowed by the several international anxieties which occupy first place in British thought. But India remains the largest, as it is the most obstinate, Imperial issue with which this generation is likely to be confronted.

Professor Coatman writes of it with the knowledge that belongs to one who, after seventeen years in the Imperial Policē, was in direct touch with the events that constitute the subject-matter of his book, and who therefore enjoyed exceptional opportunities of appraising both persons and things during a critical period of India's history. It may be that we are still too close to the picture to judge finally of the perspective, and there is much in Professor Coatman's narrative which is still matter of present controversy, and on which opinion will be divergent.

But whether or not we agree with his analysis and judgment, the knowledge that he can command will secure for his book a wide circle of readers, who will assuredly learn from it how vital and how delicate is the question with which British and Indian statesmanship is to-day called upon to deal:

IRWIN

## PREFACE

It can be argued with reason that too many books about India are appearing nowadays. What, then, is the justification for another? It is simply this: that hitherto no presentation of the march of events, of the parties and leading personalities and of the development of politics and the springs of political action in India during the five formative years, which began with Lord Irwin's arrival in India, has been made.

There has been much propaganda on one side or another, and many entertaining books by journalist and other cold-weather visitors to India have been written. Such books as these are full of *choses vues*, accompanied by such reflections as are suggested by *a priori* impressions. The present book seeks to show what has happened and to bring out the underlying forces which have been, and still are, at work, and the truly fateful character of the decisions taken, and actions accomplished, by this or that section of the Indian people and by ourselves during these years of destiny.

The world is interested in India because India means so much to the world. This study is offered in the hope that it will, at any rate provide some material for sound judgment on Indian affairs and problems which are bound to become of increasing urgency and importance as time goes on.

The main lines of future political development in India have been set by the events of the years between

1926 and 1932, and this book will, at any rate, enable readers to fit into their place the items of news, necessarily disjointed and, therefore, obscure, which will come from India as her political problem moves towards its solution—or towards deadlock.

Of Ireland in 1828, the Duke of Wellington wrote these words 'The influence and the powers of government in that country are no longer in the hands of the officers of Government, but have been usurped by the demagogues of the Roman Catholic Association who direct the country as they think proper.' Roman Catholic emancipation, bitterly resisted for so long, and deeply resented, by English politicians, had to come in the end, as had still greater changes. To my British readers I will say just this. Great changes, similar to those which took place in Ireland, have to come in India. Let them not come in the same way. Let us, rather, fix our minds on the attainment, by us as well as by the Indian peoples, of the goal set up before us by Lord Irwin's historic announcement of 31st October 1929, and by the Round Table Conference. It is our goal as well as India's, and if we accept it as such we shall work for it, and we shall find barriers of all sorts falling down.

I am indebted to the Proprietors of the *Political Quarterly* for permission to reproduce in Chapter XI some paragraphs of an article which I wrote on the Simon Report.

## CHAPTER I

### PROLEGOMENA TO HISTORY

By now, we all know that something of tremendous importance to us has happened in India during the past few years, but a fog, almost as impenetrable as the fog of war, has fallen over it. Prejudice and ignorance in different quarters interpret events in India in different ways. To some, the troubles we hear about are due to the anti-British activities of a few unrepresentative, educated agitators, a palpably insufficient explanation. To others, they are due to the oppression of the British who are holding down by force a united people striving to be free, an explanation belied by almost every word that was spoken at the Round Table Conference, by the number of British troops in India—a mere handful of sixty thousand or so compared with the three hundred and fifty and more millions of the Indian population—and by the fact that over the vastly greater part of the country the administration functions peacefully, even where there is not a British soldier within a hundred miles. Such explanations are worse than useless. They cloud counsel and confuse the issues. But how to know the truth? India is a big country with very varied peoples and conditions, and it is very far away. In the Western world we read of riots in places we never heard of before and shall probably never hear of again, and we read of the doings of men with unfamiliar names. How

can we know the true meaning and importance of what is being said and done? So we read the tabloids about India in our newspapers and form our opinions according to simple *a priori* notions. But what is happening in India now is one of the big movements in human affairs, and, sooner or later, will affect the lives of us all, most closely those of us who are British, but, ultimately, others who are not British. It is well worth while to turn aside for a space from our own immediate circumstances and try to know what is happening in India now. The movement of ideas, the stir of feelings, and the tumult of events which we call compendiously the Indian Nationalist Movement include many elements, not all of them of homogeneous quality or working in the same direction by any means. During the last few years this movement has grown and strengthened in such a way and has developed tendencies of such a kind as to mark the period off from other periods of political ferment and agitation in India, and entitle it to special study. For, as we shall see, during these five years, Indians themselves have done things, have made decisions, and have taken steps which may prove irrevocable and produce results at present entirely unforeseen, entirely different from what is expected, and entirely different from what most Indians themselves would want. For good or for evil, the years from 1926 onwards are years of destiny for India. It is a coincidence that the new turn, as we must regard it, in the direction and the *tempo* of the Indian Nationalist Movement began practically with the beginning of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the spirit underlying them, their effects in quickening the



political life of India, the reaction to them of certain important sections of Indian opinion, and, lastly, the march of events in India and the outside world, made it certain that a period of intensive political agitation must open sooner or later. The non-co-operation and allied movements—like the Khilafat agitation—of 1920 and onwards were no more than the prelude to a more dangerous and sustained movement which was bound to come later. But great personalities can still sway events in India, and the history of these years is different from what it would have been had another than Lord Irwin been Viceroy. His appointment was a momentous event for India and Britain. His personality and that of his great protagonist, Gandhi, and their dealings with each other have caught the imagination of the world and riveted attention on India as perhaps nothing else could have done. If these two occupy much of the story which follows, it is because they played a large part in the events which are described.

The choosing of a successor to Lord Reading in the viceroyalty of India was not a light responsibility for the head of His Majesty's Government in 1925. Lord Reading's acute judgment and firmness of mind had carried India through five years of critical experiment with new, untried and powerful political machinery, which had been subjected to a series of sharp tests at the hands of hostile interests inside the country and elsewhere. Had the master mechanic in charge been less experienced or less resolute than he was the machinery and the experiment might well have been involved in common ruin. When the Prime Minister announced towards the end of the year that Mr.

Edward Wood, Minister for Agriculture in His Majesty's Government, would take over the office of Viceroy on Lord Reading's retirement, England and India were interested. England because Mr Wood was known, India, because he was not known except as the grandson of Sir Charles Wood. But Sir Charles Wood is a very great name indeed in India. He had stood by 'Clemency' Canning through thick and thin, using his powerful influence as President of the Board of Control, and, later, as the First Secretary of State for India, to support that far-seeing statesman who, in the midst of bodily suffering and bereavement still more grievous, could burden himself with the task of replacing vengeance after the Mutiny by justice, and tempering this with mercy. It was Sir Charles Wood who established the system of modern education in India—a piece of work which, perhaps more than anything else, prepared the conditions from which grew the India that his grandson was to rule and serve. He did not polish sentences about India with Bright, nor cast up a shopkeeper's profit and loss account with Cobden. He preferred, instead, to work for India and apply his own liberal principles to her government as far as the circumstances of his day would permit him. The student of Indian history experiences a certain esoteric satisfaction as he considers that it was Lord Irwin's grandfather who framed and carried through Parliament the India Councils Act of 1861, which, for the first time, brought the principle of representation of the governed into the government of British India. There is a select band of Englishmen, headed by the illustrious name of Warren Hastings, who saw far beyond the events of their own

day and not only proclaimed the future nationhood of India, but did what lay in their power to bring the day of its attainment nearer. Among the names of this band that of Sir Charles Wood stands high, and thus it was that India took more than the ordinary interest in her new ruler when his name was announced.

When he laid down his office in the spring of 1931, Lord Irwin's name and personality were better known to the people of India and to the world outside than those of any of his predecessors. The reason was that the course of events during his viceroyalty had been of a kind to focus world attention on India, and Lord Irwin had proved equal in mind and character to the high test imposed upon him by those events. Also—a strange and striking circumstance—the limelight of world attention had settled on him equally with Mr. Gandhi, and in that blinding glare, which few can endure unscathed, Lord Irwin showed to no disadvantage. The five years of his viceroyalty, as we shall see, were years of almost incessant unrest and turmoil, but during their passage, a fundamental, permanent change in both the quality and the character of India's relationship with Great Britain took place. This change is fittingly and truly symbolised and expounded by the Round Table Conference, at which Indian representatives discussed the whole future of their country with representatives of Parliament, on equal terms. The preamble to the Government of India Act of 1919—that is, the Indian Constitution—says that India shall advance to responsible government by successive stages, the time and manner of which can be determined only by Parliament, 'upon whom responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of

the Indian peoples' Between this and the spirit and ideas represented by the Round Table Conference what an incalculable difference! Indians are now seized of the task of helping in, and ultimately controlling the shaping of their own political destiny. But such a change could not be brought about without actions, events and developments which will leave their mark for ever on the country. The story of these will be unfolded in the pages which follow, and the last few years in India will be seen as a seed-time during which were sown seeds whose fruits generations yet unborn will taste. At first faintly, and in part only, Lord Irwin saw the true character and trend of the events in which he found himself. As his knowledge grew, his ideas expanded and his policy clarified and strengthened, until, during the last two years of his viceroyalty, the turbulent, never-resting, continually changing whirl of Indian politics eddies around him, and the story of his doings and the development of his policy become largely the whole story of Indian affairs. This is why the account of India's seed-time is made to coincide roughly with the five fateful years of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty, and why the opening words of this narrative point to his personality and his achievement. He could not control the developments of these years any more than the captain of a ship can control the elements. But he could, and did, know the port to which he wanted to go, and he laid his course and handled his vessel accordingly.

The historian of these years is in a position both of singular good fortune and of singular difficulty. He is fortunate because it falls to his lot to describe events of world-wide importance which need no trappings of art

to reveal or emphasise their high dramatic quality, and no interpretation to show that they are the outward and visible signs of a movement in human affairs, natural, deep and irresistible, which is now at work transforming existing conditions, and, in company with certain other forces and movements of comparable importance elsewhere—political, economic and social—preparing a new world order of the future. Into his pages come figures whose personalities attract universal attention, and, what is by no means the least fascinating part of his task, it is for him to trace the continuous and constantly accelerating change and evolution in the relations between Great Britain and India, to mark their stages and to seek to know their causes.

But the difficulties which face the historian who tries to encompass all these things in his work are very great. The magnitude of the events and forces which he is describing, and the depth and complexity of their roots preclude any facile treatment of his theme and make the superficial explanations of past and present events and the simple formulæ for future action, which are daily put forward on one side or another in Britain, in India, and in other parts of the world, seem not only fatuous but almost indecent. There is no easy explanation of what has happened in India in the past few years, or of what is happening now, and certainly there is no simple rule of conduct or formulæ for action which will guide us safely through the maze of our present and future circumstances in India. We have heard much in the past, and we shall hear more in the future, of strength and weakness in British policy towards India. There are no such things as strength and weakness in policy. There are wisdom and folly

only. But wisdom is a quality of the heart no less than of the head, and the problem which faces India and Britain to-day is a moral as well as a political problem. On both sides the deepest feelings are engaged, and men of unquestionable integrity find it possible to interpret the same events in very different senses, and, taking precisely the same data as their starting point, to arrive at widely varying views in regard to future policy. Here is a very formidable difficulty for those who are searching for the truth

Again, the historian of these years finds it hard to get his material into its right perspective. He is too close to the events which he is recording, and even the immediate effects of many of them have not yet shown themselves. In other words, he has to survey and measure, not a field, or a series of static objects, but a flux. The data which he is using may be changed or even destroyed or falsified by events which are occurring now or will occur to-morrow. It can be seen, therefore, that dogmatism in Indian political affairs requires ignorance, more or less complete, as its basis. From these remarks the reader will have perceived already that we are going to study our period not as a self-contained unit of time sharply separated from what had gone before or is still to come, but as a number of links in a long chain of cause and effect, or, a better simile still, as one of the phases of a process of organic development and evolution which began long before this time and will continue long after it.

The prominent part which Lord Irwin plays in the narrative makes it desirable that we should know something about the position and powers of a Viceroy of India to-day. We shall see later that the Viceroy is

still the effective head of the Indian Government, and that all its doings reflect his personality and capacity. Nevertheless, there are profound differences between his position now and the position of the Viceroy of pre-Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms days. Then, an able, forceful, and energetic Viceroy, like Lord Curzon, could overhaul the machinery of government in India from top to bottom, according to his own ideas and wishes, tempered only by the possible opposition or criticism of a Secretary of State far away in England, and the opinions of his constitutional advisers, namely, the members of his Executive Council, all of whom were British up to the year 1909. There were no popularly elected legislatures then to be convinced or conciliated, and the Indian press was still a stripling and its conduct was strictly regulated, under the ordinary criminal law at first, and then, after 1908, under the Newspaper Incitement Act, and later still, under the very comprehensive 'Press Act.' Both these Acts were repealed in 1921. Again, before the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, Provincial Governments were still subordinate agents of the Central Government, and, with only one or two exceptions, their political institutions, and development generally, were still in the rudimentary stage. How different is the position now. The Indian press, freed from the restraints of special legislation, and subject in normal times only to the ordinary criminal law, which, for reasons familiar to students of political agitation in other parts of the world, is almost impossible to enforce against the newspapers, has grown into a powerful, and all too often unscrupulous and unfair opponent of the Government. The influence of the

press of a country is everywhere in inverse proportion to the knowledge and education of its people, and in India the prestige of the printed word is particularly high. The Legislatures, both Central and Provincial, are now highly representative bodies wielding considerable autonomous powers, particularly in the provinces, where some of the departments of administration are in charge of Ministers chosen from the Legislative Councils and responsible to them for their actions. Lastly, in this very incomplete catalogue of the changes and developments in Indian politics during recent years, must be mentioned what is, perhaps, the most important of all, namely, the emergence of India and her affairs into the full light of world attention and world publicity. The Government in India, whose head and representative is the Viceroy, now plays its part on the world stage, and is perforce constrained to a large extent in its actions by world opinion. Thus, the difference between the Viceroy of the old days and the Viceroy of to-day and to-morrow begins to emerge. The former was expected to be an administrator. The latter must be a statesman. The one consulted the interests of India as he and his advisers saw them, and also the wishes of the Secretary of State, who was the mouthpiece of the suzerain Government of Britain. The other has to look outside his own Government and that of the paramount power, and has to study the alignment of the political forces in India, the ebb and flow of Indian opinion, the march of events in his immense charge, and the interaction between these and outside opinion all over the world. It is idle to regard a change of viceroys as marking a completely new era, a clean break with the past, and



it is worse than idle, it is mischievous and dangerous, to regard the Viceroy of to-day as being in the position of his predecessors before 1921, when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were inaugurated. The very bases of his authority are changing, the conditions of his task are altered, different—and higher—qualities are demanded of him, and his work is one element, a master element, it is true, nevertheless only an element, in a continuing process which he can at the best hope only to guide.

Another aspect of the political change and development in India which is of truly fundamental importance is this: India is part of the British Empire, and with the attainment of dominion status in the future, is destined to become an autonomous member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Full dominion status is the highest political ideal of all truly representative Indian leaders, from Mr. Gandhi and the Aga Khan downwards, and in accepting and working for this ideal they are doing what the makers of the other great self-governing dominions did before them. At the end of October 1929, Lord Irwin announced, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, that dominion status is the natural issue of India's political development, and when this announcement is looked at against the background of Imperial history, it is seen to be a logical and inevitable consequence of India's membership of the Empire. For the British Empire may be likened to a system of planets moving about a central sun. From that parent body they get their existence, their light and warmth, and the cohesive power which holds them together as a system and keeps them from shooting headlong into

the void Not only that The planets influence each other and all play their part in maintaining the harmony and rhythm of the whole system So it is with the Empire As years pass and the various Dominions grow stronger, their influence over Imperial policy and in inter-Imperial affairs waxes, and the example and fortunes of the one mean continually more to all the others It is to such a system as this that India belongs, and it was thus ordained from the beginning of her connection with England that she should tread the same path as her sister members as and when her circumstances enabled her to do so The development of political liberty and institutions among Britons of the homeland and the overseas countries has been a process to which all have contributed their own peculiar shares, and ideas and achievements in one part have spread—no doubt in altered guise and sometimes by indirect ways—to all the others In a word, there is in the self governing part of the British Empire, in spite of the political and economic autonomy of its various members, a deep inner spirit common to the whole, a real unity of spiritual objective fed from the same tap-root of ideals and traditions and historic events For almost a century, the United Kingdom and her children have moved forward together in political and constitutional development, and in this study we shall see how India, the adopted child, moves forward with the others, and how certain landmarks of her own progress are directly connected with specific advances in one part or another of the Empire Thus, we have got to look at India's political development all the time as the development of a part of the British Empire, influenced by and influencing all the

other parts. To examine it in isolation, or even as the outcome of her relationship with Great Britain alone, is to ignore one of the deepest, most essential and most fruitful factors in the whole process. To the Englishman who studies Indian politics and tries to understand the point of view of Indian politicians, nothing can be more impressive and more touching than the conception of England which so many leading Indians have formed. In their hearts these men, cherish an ideal England, the England which would have been had all her statesmen and great leaders adopted as their working principles the doctrines of Burke's noble speeches on American conciliation and taxation. It is an England which never was on sea or land, *but it is an England which might be*, and (who knows?) which might come nearer to realisation by her handling of India, and through the part which Indians will play in Imperial affairs in the future. Moreover, and here we come to a thing of profound significance, some of the best spirits of India have already transferred this conception to the Empire as a whole. In 1923, the late Mr. C. R. Das wrested the leadership of the Indian National Congress from Mr. Gandhi after a fair and open fight, and, had he lived, it is as certain as anything human can be, that Mr. Gandhi would never again have assumed the leading rôle in Indian politics. In the last public speech which he ever made, a speech delivered only a few weeks before his death in 1925, Mr. Das said:

‘If the Empire furnishes sufficient scope for the growth and development of our national life, the Empire idea is to be preferred . . . dominion status to-day is in no sense servitude . . . it affords complete

protection to each constituent composing the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire, secures to each the right to realise itself and therefore it expresses and implies all the elements of Swaraj which I have mentioned. To me the idea is specially attractive because of its deep spiritual significance. I think it is for the good of India, for the good of the whole world, that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth.

The chief spokesmen of India at the Round Table Conference, both princes and representatives of British India expressed the same thoughts, and thus we see the ideals of the British Commonwealth held and cherished by men who are not themselves of British race, but who know that within the Commonwealth India may attain to a richer, safer, fuller life than ever she could enjoy outside it, and who feel that they too have contributions of value to make to its further growth and development.

In the summer of 1931, a series of events occurred which opened the eyes of all intelligent people throughout the civilised world to a truth which a few of them had known for years, namely, that there is a high and growing degree of interdependence in all that relates to material welfare between the different countries of the earth. And this interdependence is a thing which goes far beyond the acquisition of the benefits of international division of labour by all parties which have products to exchange with each other. It now involves the stability of the economic systems of the different countries, and, as time goes on, international economic relations are bound to enhance the interdependence of which we are speaking. All this has

become perfectly clear to us, but not even the World War and its *sequelæ* have yet taught mankind that there are similar deep and fundamental connections between the political systems of the world. Advance, not necessarily, or, even, preferably, along the same lines, but towards broad common objectives, and, as far as possible, in step with each other, is the ideal which the nations must keep before them if they are to avoid calamities such as will utterly dwarf the misery and ruin of the last war. What is happening now in India, in China, and in Russia, is not a series of 'interesting experiments' with which the rest of the world is concerned only indirectly or academically. On the contrary, in these vast areas and among these immense populations, movements are proceeding and forces are at work which are changing the conditions of life for us all. It is, therefore, vitally necessary that the rest of the world should appreciate what is happening and should order its conduct towards these movements with wisdom. But, appreciation and wisdom require a foundation of knowledge, and it is in the hope of making some contribution to knowledge of the Indian situation that this book is written. The theme is five years of Indian history, but the India of which it is written is a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations and of the wider society of civilised humanity.

## CHAPTER II

### THE POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN BRITISH INDIA

THE events and forces which have produced the existing political system in India are things of immense importance and interest to the world, but, up to the present, no serious and extended study of the constitutional and political development of British India has ever been published. It is true that the main landmarks have been charted from time to time, but something more is needed than a mere catalogue of dates and Acts of Parliament. We want to know something of the lively forces at work, the principles on which action has been and is being based, the growth and spread of ideas, India's contacts with the outside world, the rise of organised politics and the connection between them and the Nationalist movement in India. We want to know something of the party divisions in India and what they stand for, and what sanctions their leaders have behind their claims and their doings. These are the real, live springs of action in Indian politics, and we must understand them if we seek to know truly what is happening and if we refuse to be content with a formal chronicle of names and doings which can tell us nothing of the true inwardness of the matter.

Very little reflection will suffice to show that the present form of government in India, and the

principles and general foundations on which it rests, are very different from what they would have been had India not been brought into the British Empire. It would be idle and unprofitable to speculate as to the possible lines of development which might otherwise have been followed, but the circumstances of Nadir Shah's invasion in the latter half of the eighteenth century—the last of the great historic invasions from the North-West before the British closed that ill-omened gate—tends to show that the decaying Moghul rule at Delhi would have been replaced, sooner or later, by another and more powerful and virile Muhammadan monarchy which quite conceivably might have completed the work of the earlier Moghuls by extending its sway over those parts of India which had so far escaped conquest from the outside within historic times. But, whether this supposition is true or false, the fact remains that owing to British rule, the direction and objectives of Indian political experience and development have been completely different from what they otherwise would have been, and it is for us to examine, as fully as the inevitable limitations of space and time will allow us, the forces which have caused the changes in direction and objectives and the mechanism by which these forces have been transmitted.

Broadly, we may distinguish two main forces at work, each of which is an intricate complex of subordinate forces and influences. These two forces are, the spread of English education in India, and the general political and national development of each of the self-governing parts of the British Empire, with its consequent gradual changes and developments in the ideal and organisation of the Empire as a whole. The

mechanisms by which these forces have been transmitted to Indian development are the vast, elaborate, and constantly growing system of communications between the different parts of India herself and between India and the outside world, and, secondly, the creation of a strong and efficient system of government, central, provincial, and local, whose institutions and methods have grown and changed and evolved in response to growing and changing conditions and circumstances, both in India and in the Empire and in the world at large. Indeed, the growth of internal and external communications and the evolution of the British system of government themselves deserve the title of nation-building instruments, for, as we shall see, by their own proper power they have brought conditions into being, and have produced reactions and developments of creative force, which but for them could never have existed. The deepest, strongest and most fundamental of the forces which have been working to create the India we know to-day are those which have applied to her naturally and inevitably in virtue of her inclusion in the British Empire. The developments brought about by these would in any case have given rise to the policies of progress in education, communications, and governmental institutions which we shall study later, and justifies us in laying down as a general principle, that India has shared, and does share, in the general benefits of the rising tide of liberal ideas and feeling throughout the whole British Empire.

The working of this principle is, at first, faint and uncertain. Nevertheless, it begins almost with the beginnings of certain movements of opinion in England,



the forerunners in the second half of the eighteenth century of those powerful forces which, in the upshot, were to create an independent nation out of most of the English colonies in North America, to raise others of her colonies ultimately to the same political status as herself, to sweep away practically all traces of privilege from political life at home, to give the control of government beyond the possibility of dispute into the hands of the Commons of England, and to enfranchise practically all her adult sons and daughters, and, finally, by a series of almost imperceptible operations, to plant in India the same seeds of free institutions as have grown to such splendour in England and in her offspring. The roots of modern England's political life are to be found in the reaction against the anachronistic attempt of George III to govern as well as to reign. Even before the outbreak of the Civil War in the American colonies, there were movements of opinion, by no means negligible, directed towards the liberalising of the English Constitution, in spite of the majestic commendation of its merits by Blackstone, Burke's almost fanatical adoration, and the eulogies of foreign observers of the calibre of Voltaire and Montesquieu. Transplanted to America by an inexorable series of events, these movements struck deep roots into the strong and ample soil of the colonies and, in the end, brought about the loss of this part of our first colonial Empire. Recrossing the Atlantic, they wrought mightily, not only in England, but also on the mainland of Europe, particularly in France, and, finally, but in a weakened form, for the journey was long and the country alien, they reached India. It is not, I believe, a mere fantasy to

see in the Regulating Act of 1773 a first faint foreshadowing of better things to come, nor is it unreasonable to see in it a pale reflection of the new ideas which found such eloquent expression in Burke's speech on Conciliation with America not long afterwards. It was at any rate an attempt to bring some sort of ordered control into the administration of our affairs in India. Pitt's Act of 1784 shows still stronger traces of the same influence, for, by that year, it had been reinforced and made more effective by the ferment of feeling set up by the American War, in which the colonists helped to redeem the liberties of the Motherland as well as their own. Of course, in giving assent to the Acts of 1773 and 1784 Parliament was not consciously concerned with the constitutional development of India. But it is quite clear that the consciences of its members had been stirred by tales of misdoing on the part of some of the servants of the East India Company, and that Parliament had, in consequence, determined to do what it could towards setting up a system of just and enlightened administration in this dependency of Britain, then so new and so very remote.

Thus we see, how even more than a century and a half ago, comparatively small as was the area of India's soil which was then directly under British rule, and slight as were the ties which bound England and India together, the stir of feeling and the march of events in the other parts of the Empire produced a reflex in India, one which has grown in strength with the links which have bound the two countries ever more closely together.

In the Charter Act of 1833, even a casual observer

may see the principle at work, and the circumstances amid which the Act came to birth established beyond all doubt the definite co-partnership of India in the progress which followed the growth and application of democratic ideas both in England and elsewhere in the Empire.

Between 1784 and 1833, England had emerged from the medieval into the modern world. The American War and the French Revolution had profoundly and permanently modified men's thoughts on such things as authority and certain fundamental rights of human beings, whilst the Industrial Revolution had not only broken up the old social order to a large extent, but had even transformed the bases on which class distinctions and political power in the future were to rest. The Parliamentary Reform of 1832, itself no more than the first-fruits of a deep and wide-spread agitation with far more fundamental and comprehensive objectives than a reform of the electoral system, was a clear sign of the fall of privilege in English politics and the herald of vast changes to come in the balance of political power in England.

Students of history know some of the great achievements which the first reformed Parliament carried out under the influence of Benthamite ideas. The Poor Law of 1834, which made the English labouring classes into free self-respecting men once more, and the reform of the municipalities which modernised local self-government and made it a real thing adequate to its tasks and with the inherent power of growth and development to cope with its growing and developing circumstances, are familiar themes. But how many historians have shown the significance of the fact that

one of the earliest acts of the 'New Model' Parliament was the passing of the Indian Charter Act of 1833, and how many, again, have linked up the spirit and contents of this Act with that other great achievement of the same Parliament, the liberation of slaves throughout the whole of the British world? The Parliament of 1832 was very largely a Parliament of the middle class of England, the class which was the most deeply imbued with the ideals of Wilberforce and the Evangelicals, whose parish was the world, and whose help and consideration were for the depressed of other countries even more, perhaps, than of their own. The Charter Act of 1833 is only one of a number of Indian Charter Acts passed decennially after an enquiry into the circumstances of India, but the new men and the new ideas in Parliament ensured that it should be different in spirit and in its ultimate scope from all previous Acts of the same kind. The basic principle of the Charter Act of 1833 and the ideas and ideals underlying the liberation of the slaves are both effects of one and the same great progressive movement in English politics and are both applications of the same theory of responsibility for the moral and material welfare of all the subjects of the immense and varied territories committed to the charge of Parliament.

So it is not surprising that in the Act of 1833, among other provisions we find boldly stated one of the leading provisions of the future 'Magna Charta' of India, Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, issued on the occasion of the assumption by the Crown of the *direct responsibility for the government of India*. 'No native of the said territories,' runs the provision

in question, 'shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be debarred from holding any place, office or employment under the (East India) Company.' In this clause there lies implicit a vast principle which has worked with increasing strength and clearness as the years have passed. It is the principle of equality, both of status and opportunity of all the King's subjects, whether Indian or British. And two years later, Macaulay's Education Minute, which Sir Charles Wood wielded with bold imagination, was to be the instrument of bringing Indian students in due course into contact with the main stream of the world's thought and learning. Since those days, Indian opinion has centred in, and events have marched steadily towards the realisation of three main ideals—the increase of the non-official element in the Councils, both Legislative and Executive, of India, the introduction of the principle of election in Indian politics, and, finally, self-government, or, to use the well-known term now more favoured, dominion status for India. The first two have already been realised, and the first steps towards the realisation of the third have been taken.

There is no need to dwell in any detail on the stages of India's political and constitutional progress between 1833 and 1909, the year of the Morley-Minto Reforms, for they are described with singular force and clarity in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. I have been concerned to point out the existence and the working of a great principle whose latest and greatest manifestations are the summoning and the results of the Round Table Conference, and I have thought it worth while to dwell on this point as an irrefutable

proof of the truth of the statement that India's connection with the Empire has not been, because the spirit and all the history and traditions of the Empire, its very *ethos*, forbid it to be, a source of degradation or opportunity for the exercise of mere despotism. On the contrary, it is maintained that communities living within the great Commonwealth, and particularly within the orbit of England's Parliament, are drawn into a common life and share in its progress as inevitably as the planets share the warmth and life of the sun and feed their own life from it.

One criticism of British rule in India which is almost as old as the Charter Act itself, has, during the last two decades or so, been urged with increasing force and frequency. There are many who will not deny the truth of the propositions contained in the preceding paragraphs, but who complain of the slowness with which the principle we are now discussing has worked. They say that the Government of India has been under the immediate control of Parliament for three-quarters of a century, that is, approximately for three human generations, and yet even now, India is still far from enjoying the same measure of self-government as certain other members of the British Commonwealth. This lag in progress is attributed by such critics to lack of desire or determination on the part of the British rulers to allow India to grow to her full national stature. Such criticism shows a lack of appreciation of the real task which faced the British in India. This was not, as the criticism assumes, the mere assumption by the British of the rule which the Moghul had grown too weak to exercise, and the subsequent replacing of autocratic by democratic institutions. Had their task

been nothing more than this, it would have been sufficiently difficult. But, in truth, it was something infinitely more strange and difficult and complicated. It was, as Macaulay in one of his greatest oratorical efforts in the House of Commons quite truly declared, nothing less than the 'stupendous process' of 'the reconstruction of a decomposed society.'

It is greatly to be hoped that some day the Indian Government will publish the more important of the old settlement reports which are now gathering dust and slowly mouldering in undisturbed corners of official record rooms. At intervals of about thirty years, each district in British India, except those in the permanently settled parts of India, namely, Bengal and one or two adjacent areas, undergoes a sort of Domesday inquest for land revenue purposes, and the settlement report is the district Domesday Book in which the officer conducting the settlement records fully and conscientiously the state of the people and the district. Written not for publication but for practical purposes of administration and for the information of official superiors, there is no exaggeration or conscious misstatement in these reports, no straining for effect, nothing but the truth baldly stated and supported by figures and other first-class evidence. Nevertheless, many of the older reports of the settlements made when one part or the other of India first passed under British rule, contain vivid descriptions of the often all but incredible state of affairs which the first British administrators found, and from these reports the reader can see at once what Macaulay meant when he talked about the reconstruction of a decomposed society.

One of the loveliest spots in India, or, for that matter, in the whole world, is the Kulu sub-division of the Kangra District in the Punjab. In the High Himalayas, far remote from the main current of the world's affairs, Kulu and Kangra have lived in idyllic peace since the Punjab passed into British hands. The folk are gentle and kindly, crime is all but unknown, and Kulu is the scene of an ideal local 'industrial revolution' in the form of the development of a fruit-growing industry. Lastly, this part of the Himalayas has always lain far outside the tracks of invading armies and raiding hordes. Yet listen to what is said about it in the first settlement report of the Kangra district, written by one of the assistants of John Lawrence himself. In the pre-British days, the petty hill Rajas, whose numbers are legion, in their incessant battles of kites and crows, used to call in mercenaries from outside to help them against their adversaries of the moment. 'The memory of these disastrous wars,' writes Barnes, 'stands out as a landmark in the annals of these hills. Time is computed with reference to that period, and every misfortune, justly or unjustly, is ascribed to that prolific source of misery and distress. Each party plundered the districts held by the other to weaken his adversaries' resources. The people fled to the neighbouring kingdoms. In the fertile valleys of Kangra not a blade of cultivation was to be seen, grass grew up in the towns and tigers whelped in the streets of Nadaun.' A much more recent report, written by the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, of whom Lord Morley speaks so highly in his *Recollections*, tells of the state of a district near Delhi when it first came into British possession nearly a hundred years ago. Lying in the



track of Nadir Shah's destroying host, and part of the area over which Sikh and Mahratta fought for mastery fifty years later, its social life and rural economy had been smashed and disintegrated and its surviving folk reduced to living much as the parties to a blood feud live now in tribal territory across the North West Frontier. One of the most authoritative writers on Indian affairs who has ever lived is the late Sir William Hunter, and, when quite a young man, he wrote a book which he called *The Annals of Rural Bengal*. In this book, which is based upon and quotes largely from official documents of the eighteenth century, when British administration in Bengal was still in the making, the reader will find perfectly authentic pictures of a state of affairs similar to that now existing in the ravaged parts of China. And over immense tracts of India, similar conditions prevailed in the second half of the eighteenth century and later as the result of the break up of the Moghul Empire and the general anarchy which followed.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, again, the British were still extending and consolidating their rule, and before they could fairly begin the work of reconstruction and modernisation of the machinery of government in India, the Mutiny drew all their energies and thought to its suppression. All this, perhaps, gives some hint of the vastness of the scope and complexity of the early British task in India. Not only had some framework of government to be devised for all those parts of the country which had passed under British rule, and not only had the great administrative departments to be created and their subordinate personnel to be educated and trained, but

over immense areas the conditions under which civilisation could exist and endure had to be restored. In a word, before there could be any thought of making India safe for democracy, much of it had to be made safe for human life itself.

Consider for a moment the vast expenditure of capital and administrative effort involved in the provision of communications in a spacious sub-continent like India. Examine, also, the more obvious considerations involved in the introduction into India of a system of justice and police organised according to certain basic principles of English justice, principles which have evolved during centuries of free self-government among a proud and fiercely independent people and are now as native a feature of English life as the oak is of the English landscape. Then compare the latest globe-trotting account of a progress through India, or the conditions revealed by the Indian Railway advertisements or passenger agents' hand books with certain old classics of Anglo-India. *The Confessions of a Thug*, Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections*, Herbert Edwardes's *Year on the Punjab Frontier*, Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, and others. Not all the statistics ever printed in Blue books will give so just an idea of the immensity of the administrative efforts made and the progress achieved. Then, if you like, read up the details of the wonderfully complete network of law courts, both civil and criminal, and of the heroic labour of the Irrigation, Medical, and other departments to which India and humanity owe an incalculable debt. They will but heighten the impression already gained. Of education I need speak but briefly. In spite of much declaration to the contrary, the British

found no system of popular education in India, for the indigenous institutions attached to certain temples and mosques do not answer to this description, while to-day, many thousands of primary and secondary schools, technical, legal, and medical colleges, and (eighteen?) universities, one of them, Calcutta University, started in 1857 during the agony of the Mutiny, attest the efforts made in this, one of the most vital of all departments of public activity.

The above is not an apology for British rule in India. It is put forward as one of the basic conditions of the problem which we are now considering. To insist on the humanitarian achievements of the British in India is not necessarily to claim them as binding reasons for the indefinite continuation of British rule in its present form. But cure depends on accurate diagnosis, and this in turn depends on a careful review of every item of relevant information available. In these days, there is a tendency in many quarters to form opinions on Indian problems after a hasty scrutiny of certain superficial aspects of the present time. Such opinions cannot possibly be helpful, and may, on the contrary, be productive—indeed, they have already been productive—of great harm.

Yet all this time, as material conditions in India steadily improved, the slow and almost imperceptible broadening of the base of India's government proceeded, linked inevitably, as one atom of matter with another, to the broadening basis of government in England and throughout the Empire. The year of popular upheaval in Europe, 1848, had produced its reflex in England in the crisis of the Chartist agitation, and, by the 'sixties, with certain of our more instant pre-occupations in

heard and the duty of the executive to defend its measures. Provision was made for the admission to the Governor-General's Legislative Council, and to the Councils of the Governors of Madras and Bombay and of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, of half a dozen non-officials, including Indians. A critic might urge that the scope of these Councils was very narrow, limited as it was to the giving of advice, and that in any case, India was then only entering on the stage through which the English colonies had passed, and was even then not in full possession of certain instruments which the other countries mentioned had found to be outworn. All this is true, but the peculiar conditions of India, some of which have been referred to earlier, must be borne in mind. And, in any case, the principle is what matters. For the introduction of a principle is not the addition of a mere bit of machinery. It is something far more than an act of administration. It is the planting of a seed which contains within itself the impulse and the power to grow and burgeon.

Historical parallels are notoriously unsatisfactory, but Lord Elgin's connection with India and his work in Canada tempts me to dwell for a moment on the analogy between the latter and its reception by certain sections of opinion both in Canada and in England, with Lord Irwin's work in India and the attitude towards it taken up by many Indians and many of his own countrymen. Both these statesmen found themselves forced by circumstances which were the outcome of deep forces and antecedent events, to adopt policies and make decisions of fundamental and permanent importance. The minds and characters of both had much in common, and both were in positions in which

responsibility for policy and decisions rested ultimately in them and in them alone. There is not one man to-day, however reactionary or prejudiced he may be, who does not realise that Lord Elgin acted rightly in Canada in 1848, and there are solid reasons for asserting that history will record a similar verdict on Lord Irwin's work in India.

The half-dozen or so sections which begin with Section 64 of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918, provide some of the most interesting and important reading to be found in the whole great mass of State Papers relating to India. They deal with the discussions which preceded the Indian Councils Act of 1892, and among the suggestions put forward by the most eminent administrators are to be found striking resemblances to some of the leading proposals of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report itself. Out of all this discussion came the application to Indian politics of another great principle—the principle of democratic election.

Much had happened between 1861 and 1892 and India's progress in all directions had been vast. A large and already influential body of Indians, an Indian intelligentsia, was in existence, whose members had been educated on Western lines. The growth of elementary and higher education had been respectable and was proceeding rapidly. The administrative system in its main outlines was that with which we are now familiar, and already Indians had made their way into its higher ranks. Communications and trade had grown out of all knowledge.

But, behind the impressive growth of material and administrative progress during these years, something

of still more import for India's future had come to birth. It was that unrest which necessarily precedes a people's self-assertion and it grew quickly into what has been called the Indian National Movement. At first inchoate and unorganised, it found a medium for its expression in the Indian National Congress, which grew into the rallying point of all the elements of this vague unrest, and in time reduced it to a recognisable body of doctrine and a specific list of demands. It is to the period of Lord Ripon's viceroyalty that the movement owes its birth, and once again we find this new development related to the stir and progress of ideas and events in the rest of the Empire.

In 1880, Mr Gladstone found himself in power in England, and pledged, implicitly if not explicitly, to explore all possible means of political progress in India. Irish affairs, too, were exercising his mind, and his reflections on them were to issue a few years later in his first Home Rule Bill. It was not possible that the case of India should be considered in utter isolation from that of Ireland and the rest of the Empire, especially by such a man, and when, in the very year of the Liberal victory at the polls, the office of Viceroy of India fell vacant, Mr Gladstone had no hesitation in appointing to it Lord Ripon, who was well known as one of the most progressive statesmen in England. It was from these years onwards that educated Indians began to see that Indian political progress and the realisation of Indian aspirations were not and could not be divorced entirely from the progress of opinion and politics in the rest of the Commonwealth, and particularly England, and that they and their people had become part of a world-wide community.

which, from the very conditions of its structure and existence, must hold liberty and toleration in the forefront of its politics. Also, the greater leaders of the Indian people began from now onwards to see that it was for Indians themselves to reach out for, and take possession of the gifts of freedom which England offered to all her family, and the conviction of this shines through the writings and speeches of such famous pioneers of Indian Nationalism as Dadabhai Navroji and Mr Gokhale.

The irony of fortune has rarely been so freakishly displayed as in the fate of the Ilbert Bill, which was Lord Ripon's most resounding attempt to put his principles into practice. In essence this Bill proposed to amend criminal law so as to allow Indian magistrates of a certain standing to try European offenders. The law has long since been altered to this effect, but in those far-off days it appeared to be a very formidable and dangerous innovation. It was fiercely contested by non official Europeans, and just as fiercely supported by the vocal sections of Indian opinion. But, out of the clash of hostile opinions and angry passions roused by this attempt, a new light appeared—as when two dead worlds meet in space and a mighty incandescence tells astronomers that a star is born—a light which was henceforth to illumine the opinions of Englishmen as well as of Indians. It was the idea, hitherto foreign to the Oriental mind, that it is the duty of a citizen to stand up for his rights, an idea the justness of which no Englishman, least of all men, can deny. Thus, from the 'eighties of last century onwards is seen in India the working of a further principle, one which Englishmen themselves had established by centuries of

sacrifice and suffering, the principle that every man is entitled to his own opinion and that it is right and lawful for him to give expression to it, and to seek to translate it into action, provided that in doing so he keeps within the limits of the law of the land and does not seek to destroy the right of any of his fellows.

From now onwards, the march of political progress in India is rapid and the pace tends always to accelerate. The Act which closes this first long chapter of political and constitutional development in India is the inauguration of what are known as the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the distinctive features of which are to be found in the Councils, both Central and Provincial, which the Reforms either brought into being or else extended in scope and size. A more fully representative capacity, greater powers of interpellation and criticism, and wider influence generally, were given to the popular representatives in these Councils, and in the Morley-Minto Reforms, the *geistiges Band* between the members of the British Commonwealth, the reaction of the progress of every one upon each of the others becomes more clearly apparent than at any previous time. After the General Election in England in 1905 progressive ideas were once more in the ascendant. The admission of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to responsible self-government in 1907 and the creation of the Union of South Africa, the greatest acts of Imperial statesmanship since the 'fifties of last century, were the necessary consequences of the development of opinion in England, and these fortunate and fruitful developments were quickly followed by the reforms in India.

The principles whose introduction into Indian politics



we have been following are quickening principles, quickening, I mean, in the old English sense of the word. Therefore, their actions could not and cannot be confined within set bounds as if they were mere formulæ. When conditions are favourable, they grow and expand, and, following the law of their existence, they shrink and dwindle when conditions are hostile. And these conditions, favourable or hostile, are not altogether external conditions. Partly, they are conditions of human character and depend on the existence of certain ideals of conduct, of a certain way of regarding one's obligations to one's fellow-men, on a certain national and social solidarity. Nevertheless, however great the inner growth of a principle may be, however receptive the soil of human conditions in which it is planted, it requires for its outward expression, for its translation into deeds, that external conditions be favourable. The Scottish Covenanters cherished their religion the more fiercely as oppression waxed, but they could not build their churches and spread the Word among their other countrymen whilst Claverhouse's troopers dragooned the land. India's general conditions during the years which, between Lord Ripon's viceroyalty and the present day, were, on the whole, favourable to political growth. Internally, there was peace and a steadily rising level of national wealth and prosperity, and externally, after the delimitation of the northern boundary of Afghanistan, where it marches with Russian territory, the old shadow of a war with Russia gradually lifted and virtually disappeared after the settlement of the English and Russian spheres of influence in Persia in 1907. The greatest of all the frontier campaigns, the all-embrac-

ing campaign of 1897, produced but slight reflex in India. Lord Curzon's viceroyalty in the last year of the nineteenth and the first years of the twentieth centuries saw the inauguration of immense reforms in every branch of the administration, all devoted to modernising and making more efficient the governmental machine.

Thus, it is not surprising that during these years, Indian opinion on the subject of Indian politics grew steadily more definite and vocal, and pressed with ever increasing force against existing institutions. For, to use a homely metaphor, those great, living principles, now become part of India's political heritage, were all the time growing out of their clothes. Political ideas and aspirations were no longer confined to the small class of the Western educated intelligentsia, but spread year by year to other classes of the people. Revolutionary crime, too, made its appearance, and has caused many of the passages of Indian history to be written in red. The Indian National Congress, founded by Englishmen and Indians in the middle 'eighties and fostered in its infant stages by the Indian Government, has grown in strength, and its aims have become continually more comprehensive, and, as far as one of its sections is concerned, more and more extreme. All over India, educated men have taken, in a greater or less degree, to politics, and the numbers, ubiquity, and influence of the Indian press have waxed apace. As we turn over the pages of this long chapter of Indian history, we see, dumb enough at first, the working of certain fundamental principles which have become part of India's political heritage as inevitably, and almost as imperceptibly, as the life giving oxygen from

the air enters into the composition of a living, breathing creature. We have seen the working of these principles grow stronger and more visible with the passing of the years, and, finally, we have seen India herself conscious of them as part of her own spiritual fabric, to be nourished and tended by herself and for her own sake. The tremendous episode of the War then magnified and speeded up the action of all the varied forces which over a century of history had produced and nurtured, and brought us face to face with the necessity of the vital advances of the 1919 Act—brought us, that is, to the threshold of India of to-day.

### CHAPTER III

## MATERIAL AND MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN INDIA

THE forces which have been set to work by the educating of India on Western lines, and, above all, in the English language, have been no less powerful than those released by the purely political developments which we have been studying, and have mightily reinforced their action. It is perfectly true that India is still split by religious, racial, social, linguistic and cultural differences, that her many races have not yet fused, or, perhaps, have not yet even started to fuse into a homogeneous people, linked throughout by common traditions, aims, ideals, and all the other mighty intangibles which make a solid unity out of innumerable diverse entities. It is as true now as it has been at any time during the past half-century, that the total withdrawal of British control from India within the near future would mean the flying apart of the many units of which she is composed, and that some of these would fly, and remain permanently, outside the orbit of any India which might arise out of the ashes of the old British Dominion. Nevertheless, important and weighty as these elements in the Indian problem are—and any analysis is worthless which fails to recognise them and assign to them their full value—there are other conditions of the problem sufficiently important to make it impracticable for us to rest our

ideas and base our policy solely on the avowed and obvious existence of these elements of danger and disruption. Countervailing factors arise out of the economic and educational developments of the past century or so, which have transformed the conditions under which British Rule in India became possible and advanced to its present bounds. Further, the transformation has taken place, not only in the internal conditions of India, but—a thing of vastly greater importance—in the conditions of India's position in the world system and of her intercourse with the other members of the human family. And this change has taken place in both the material and the moral spheres.

Whatever may be said of India's many diversities, one thing is undeniable, namely, that India, the Indian States as well as British India, is now a markedly individual and closely integrated economic unit. None of the different climatic regions comprised in this greater India could, in isolation from the others—in such isolation as existed, for example, before the coming of railway and other modern means of communication—enjoy anything like the same economic conditions and standards of living as they enjoy at present. A return to such isolation, which would be ensured by any prolonged interruption in the working of communications, would involve not merely a general down-grading of economic conditions, but literally catastrophic results. Very little thought is needed to show the truth of this.

Since the first census of India was taken in 1871, the true increase in the population, after allowing for the inclusion of new areas and improved methods of

enumeration, has been at the rate of over a million a year, and during the last two or three decades, the rate of increase has accelerated. Between 1921 and 1931, the population of India increased by over thirty millions. In fact, between 1871 and 1931, about eighty-two millions have been added to the population of India, that is, nearly twice the population of the United Kingdom and two-thirds of that of the United States.

This increase in numbers has been accomplished by a growing urbanisation following on the rise of such modern factory industries as jute, cotton and woollen textile manufactures, iron and steel works, leather making, and other forms of organised industrial activity. Thus, in addition to the ancient and historic capital cities like Delhi, Patna, Allahabad and others, there are in India numbers of modern cities, the creations of British rule and the economic developments which have accompanied it. Among these, cities like Calcutta and Bombay are famous and rank among the most populous cities of the world. These immense and growing aggregations of people are dependent for their very existence from day to day on the smooth functioning of communications and the multitudinous operations of modern trade and industry. Gone for ever are the old conditions under which comparatively small tracts around the towns could furnish them with food, and when the activities of the townsfolk, intellectual and political, as well as economic, mattered little or not at all to anybody outside their immediate neighbourhood.

A glance at a commercial map of India will show a land of many villages—nearly three-quarters of a

million of them—thickly sown with towns ranging from the little market towns of five or six thousand souls apiece, through the larger district headquarters and similar important settlements, up to the mighty emporia and workshops represented by Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur, where the Tata steel works are, Cawnpur, Amritsar, and many others. Running through and between these towns are over forty thousand miles of railway, sixty thousand miles of good metalled roads, and lesser roads innumerable. Everywhere the telegraph wires have extended, and India is linked now from end to end by telephone communications over which calls can be made for distances which are counted in thousands of miles. Year by year, railways, roads, telegraphs and telephones, extend to areas hitherto untouched by them, and motor transport is increasing by leaps and bounds. The railways alone carry between six and seven hundred million passengers a year, and who shall say how many are tempted abroad by the charms and ease of the new methods of transport on the road. The figures of letters and parcels carried by the post office are of positively astronomical dimensions. Then, too, as the traveller journeys along the roads, he hears from time to time the chug-chug of an oil or steam or petrol engine where some enterprising villager has started a tiny rural industry—cotton-ginning, oil-seed or sugar-cane pressing, and so on—the beginnings, it cannot be doubted, in many cases, of a factory industry of the future and an industrial town in place of the small mud hamlet of to day. In thousands of villages, these modest industrial undertakings are widening the horizons of those who work them, are introducing them step by

step into affairs and interests unknown to their fathers, and setting up centres of attraction for a tiny and almost imperceptible, but, nevertheless, growing stream of mobile labour. Thus, the unseen boundaries of village and town and city are widening and coalescing, barriers have gone and are going, and economic forces, which, as bitter experience has shown, appear to be beyond the control of even the most advanced and highly organised nations, are making all parts and all peoples of India one body in, at any rate, the material side of life. Moreover, the growth of communications has brought India into intimate economic relations with all other parts of the world. She is now an important part of the world market, with all that these words imply in international relations, and none of the great industrial and trading countries can be indifferent to her welfare and her conditions. Her sons and daughters go all over the world, and increasing numbers of travellers come to India. Cables and wireless have enabled Indian affairs to become an important part of world news, and, reciprocally, have brought the views of the outer world to India which has been thus brought ever further into the middle of the main stream of the world's life. To the outer world India is one country, her people have to describe themselves to foreigners as Indians, and from this to thinking of themselves as Indians is not such a very long step to take, particularly under modern conditions of easy communications and constant intercourse. Greatly important, also, is the part directly played by communications in the political and national growth of India. They have made effective the unification of widespread provinces and their association with each



other under the general control of one central Government, and this in turn has given rise and scope to those conditions, influences, forces—call them what we will—which are working to produce an Indian nation out of the different peoples and races living in India. Before the growth of communications, what are now the provinces of British India were geographical areas joined together in mechanical union. Now they, and, in increasing measure, the Indian States with them, are an organism through which the same forces, economic and political, can flow freely, affecting them all in the same ways and creating all the time fresh ties of common interest between them, common reactions and common sentiments. Clearly, these processes have been attended by results of the most profound and far-reaching importance on Indian opinion, Indian education, and Indian aspirations.

The spread of education on Western lines in India has worked in the same way. In the first place, it has given India the invaluable, unifying agency of a common language. It is true that in Moghul days Persian had a great vogue as the official language throughout those parts of India which were subject to Moghul rule, but, quite apart from the fact that much of present day India never was under Moghul rule, there is a vast difference between the spread of education through the medium of English and the use of Persian for administrative purposes in those old days. The stress here is on the word 'education,' for the Persian language of two or three and more centuries ago could unlock no new treasure-houses of knowledge for Indian students, and was learnt merely as the court language, whereas English has led Indians into a new

world of knowledge and ideas, has introduced them not only to the learning and science of the West, but, more important from our point of view, also to the stores of political experience and ideas, and, above all, to the innermost spirit of the English ideals of liberty and freedom enshrined in some of the greatest literature of the world.

The force of the impact of all these things on ardent minds coming to them fresh cannot be fully known or felt by us, but none of us is so dull as not to be able to perceive that it must have been very great and that it must have produced wide and deep effects, permanently and radically moulding Indian thoughts and ideals and ambitions, and guiding their currents. The English language is the invisible, non-material highway between India and the West, just as steamships, cables and aircraft form the visible, material highway. With English as the common language for all India, doing on the cultural and spiritual side the work done by inland and international communications on the economic and political sides, all India can now share and pool ideas and ideals in common, and have an India-wide system of education, uniform in its main features and results, a nation-building force of incalculable power, and, further, can join in the intellectual life of the world, both giving and taking through this priceless possession of knowledge of the greatest of all languages. It is the possession of a common language which, together with the material conditions created by the growth of modern methods of communication, has made possible the growth of all-India political associations and the spread of political ideas from end to end of the country. But for

it, the All-India National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Legislature itself would not have been possible. Nay, even the provincial legislatures and provincial organisations would not have been possible, for there is hardly a province in India in which one language is spoken by all its people,

Another point, of the very greatest significance should be noticed in connection with the spread of knowledge of the English language in India, or, indeed, among any peoples who, like the inhabitants of India, are subject to a foreign rule. It is this. When once the leaders, and the educated classes generally, of such peoples, become seized of the knowledge of the English tongue and thereby gain access to its literature and thought, the initiative in political and national development in the governed country passes from the rulers to the ruled. For these have come to the fountain head of freedom and what they drink fills their veins with fire and their hearts and minds with desires and thoughts which no external power henceforth can curb or direct. During the War, a Commission was appointed to study the organisation and methods of the Calcutta University and the educational system dependent on it. One of the members started a discussion on the desirability of educating Bengalis in their own language when, quick as lightning, the great Vice-Chancellor of the University, Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, intervened. 'We won't have our young men deprived of English,' he said, 'for it is the language of freedom.' What a testimony, and what a wonderful epitome of the history of India under British rule.

So, by the spread of knowledge of the English language, we see forces liberated, of literally incalculable

might, all working in different ways to influence and change the relations between India and England, and, let us not forget, in England itself, since the eighteenth century, the whole spirit and conception of the State and of the organisation and purpose of the Empire have changed, and never so fast or so profoundly as during the past two decades

A true appreciation of the kinds of changes which have been taking place in the very bases of the conditions of the relations between England and India now begins to emerge. Political change and progress in India are being governed by great forces, and at last we can see the present situation in India merely as a violent and dramatic, but temporary, phase of a much wider, and a permanent movement.

The effects on the educated sections of the Indian people of these developments and influences which have been traced above must have been of great, and, possibly, of decisive importance, even if India had remained practically shut off from the rest of the world as she was only two or three generations ago. But the ever-growing facilities for travel to and from India, and, above all, the great efflux of Indians during the last two decades or so from India to other countries for purposes of study, business, or pleasure, have brought what we might call the question of 'status' to a point at which it demands an immediate answer. There are now many Indians who are graduates of one or other of the most famous universities of the world, and it is a common reproach against these 'Europe returned' Indians in certain quarters, that their sojourn abroad has done no more than turn them into bitter opponents of the British Government in

India This charge of disaffection is not generally true, but it is true in very many cases, and the reason is not difficult to understand, it is that intimate daily contact with the citizens of national autonomous states has brought home to them in a dozen ways—sometimes in peculiarly galling ways—the inferiority of their own status, and has filled them with the desire, and very often the determination, to achieve an equal status with their British rulers and other self-governing peoples. Wherever there is contact between India and the rest of the world, this matter of status is bound to be a thing of burning, all-important interest to the Indians who are at the point of contact, and, through them, ultimately, to ever-widening circles of their countrymen. Status, as Indians conceive it, and as it in fact is, includes many elements, but its essence is to be found in self-government for India. Yet, as innumerable published statements, platform utterances and, not least, the proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference make clear, responsible Indian opinion recognises that India cannot advance to self-government, or, as we now express it, full dominion status, at one step. Indian leaders, including Mr Gandhi, know that there are conditions peculiar to India which would make immediate, full and uncontrolled self-government a veritable gift of the Danaï. Most of them fully realise the necessity for a transitional period during which the Constitution of India will be something less than full dominion status. But the solution of the question of the general status of Indian Nationals, in their own country and abroad, will brook no delay. Nor need it do so, for the promulgation of a Constitution announcing dominion status for India,

and containing provisions for the automatic assumption of full powers of self-government by Indians when circumstances and conditions permit, would satisfy Indian aspirations on this point. But the point to be noticed here is that the emergence of this ideal of national status in the minds of Indians is a driving force of tremendous power urging them on to the attainment of their political goal of complete self-government, and is another influence making for unity where there are so many others making for diversity and dissipation of energy along different and contracted lines.

While it would take us too far out of our course to discuss the rise and progress of the many Indian political organisations, it is impossible to understand the political events of the last few years without knowing something of the main grouping of Indian opinion represented by such bodies as the All-India National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Liberal Federation, and the Justice Party of Southern India, which have sprung up in the ground prepared by the great instruments of constitutional progress, the growth of communications, and the spread of English education which we have examined already. The Justice Party, it is true, finds its main strength in the Madras Presidency, but it is very powerful in the Central Provinces and in the Bombay Presidency, and its vigorous organisation, capable leadership, and very definite and clear-cut point of view raise it to the status of an All-India group of opinion. These bodies are by no means homogeneous in all their aims, and certainly not in the classes and communities from which they are recruited, but they are all parts of the one great

movement of India towards the attainment of the ideal which all her children cherish of a united, self-governing country, taking her place among the great nations of the earth. They are organisations which have been called into being by the forces which we have been studying, and are a natural and inevitable development of the processes of education and economic and political consolidation which have been going on in India certainly since the government of the country was taken over by the Crown in 1858, and even before that. People are apt to talk of the Nationalist Movement in India as though it were controlled by one organisation and were the concern of one political party. This is not true. The various bodies mentioned above and many others are all part of the Indian Nationalist Movement whose roots, as we have seen, strike deep and spread wide in soil which is natural and has been prepared for them.

As might be expected, in view of the division of the people of India into communities and races with deeply differing ideas, ambitions and interests, the most easily noticeable groupings of opinion are the communal groupings. Another line of cleavage is found between provincial, and what are generally known as 'All-India' organisations. Provincial questions and problems, even when they seem to be no more than small replicas of All-India problems, possess a provincial peculiarity, and, very often, affect the alignment of opinion in different ways from that in which their counterparts at the centre of things affect it. The truth of this will be seen later when we examine the response in India to the appointment of the Simon Commission.

## CHAPTER IV

### PROLOGUE TO 1926

SUCH was the long, slow, secular trend of development in India, the preparation of the soil for the seed-time of these later years. Britons, Indians, and, indeed, the whole of civilised mankind, partly initiating and controlling, and partly controlled by the forces whose action and effect we have been studying, have been all the while changing the conditions—political, moral and material—which had made British dominion over India on the old terms possible. But what was the immediate act of preparation for the sowing of 1926 and onwards? This has to be looked for in the Government of India Act of 1919—the well-known Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms—and its working, and the conditions to which it gave rise.

The essence of the Act is to be found in its character as the first of the stages contemplated by the declaration of August 1917, that is, as the first step towards the new goal of responsible self-government for India. And there is another profoundly important side to this aspect of the 1919 Act and the declaration of 1917. The very enunciation of the principle that India's ultimate goal was responsible self government, and the embodiment of that principle in the fundamental document of the Indian Constitution, introduced a new, active, and vital element into the process of Indian political and constitutional development. The



clear and unequivocal definition, for the first time in the history of British India, of her ultimate goal must in any case have greatly increased the strength and efficiency of the Indian Nationalist Movement, by giving to its leaders and its followers an objective both material in content and satisfying to national self-respect. Naturally, there were bound to be wide differences of opinion in respect to the mode and pace of advance to the goal, but the goal itself was the subject of common agreement between dissimilar and, even, hostile sections of opinion in India. Further, the definition of the goal inevitably implied a clarifying of ideas and aspirations on the part of Indians themselves, and a more real and easily perceptible ranging of political opinion into groups with their own leaders, and their own programmes and organisations, more or less permanent and effective. This, in turn, led to the examination of the methods and tactics to be employed to promote progress towards the desired goal, and so to the development of a technique of agitation, particularly by the Congress Party. Again, the elevation of the goal raised the entire level of Indian political aspiration and agitation, widened the scope and range of Nationalist demands, and liberated sentiments and energies which had hitherto lain 'dormant. Lastly, and here we come to a matter of tremendous import, one which renders otiose the furious discussions carried on in India and in England since Lord Irwin's announcement of 31st October 1929, the declaration of responsible self government as India's ultimate goal bore implicit in it the promise of ultimate dominion status for India. From the moment of Mr Montagu's announcement in Parliament in

August 1917, it was quite inevitable that, for the words 'responsible self-government' the words 'dominion status' must be substituted sooner or later. After what has been said in Chapter II, the reader will easily perceive why such a substitution was inevitable. Step by step, and at an interval suitable to her peculiar circumstances, India has followed in the wake of the great self-governing dominions, drawn after them by a force which seems almost as natural and irresistible as the force of gravity. So it had to be, and so it has been in this matter also. When Lord Irwin's announcement of 1929 is discussed, the meanings of the two conceptions of responsible self-government and dominion status will be examined. That India must pass through the stage of responsible self-government is a necessary consequence of the conditions of her problem, but that this stage must ultimately be transformed into full dominion status is the necessary consequence not only of her own development but of her membership of the British Commonwealth.

Here there is no need to do more than indicate in broad outline the main features of the 1919 Act so as to show the extent of the progress which it represents in the direction of responsible self-government, and to explain the present system of government in India with the view of enabling readers to understand primarily the position and power of the Viceroy, a necessary preliminary to the exposition of Lord Irwin's rule and policy which is our direct interest in this book.

The hierarchy of Indian government is the British Parliament, through its agent the Secretary of State for India in Council, the Government of India, and the

Provincial Governments. But it must not be forgotten that the strongest link between England and India, just as between England and the self-governing dominions, is the Crown. And as India progresses towards dominion status, this link will become increasingly strong until it holds her to the rest of the Commonwealth by bonds stronger than any which could be forged by material powers alone. Each of the members of the governing hierarchy has been deeply affected by the 1919 Act, far more deeply, indeed, than appears from its mere wording. The relations between the Secretary of State for India and the Indian Government were left by the Act far more plastic than they had been before, more capable of being, and meant to be, moulded by the force of developments in Indian politics and Indian public opinion.

What do we mean by the phrase, 'The Government of India'? To one familiar with Indian conditions, the words have a quite definite content and mean the central executive of the country as distinct from the governments in the provinces. Further, the central executive consists of the Viceroy, or, to give him his correct legal title, the Governor-General, and his Executive Council whose members hold the portfolios for the various administrative departments, such as Home, Finance, Industries and Labour, Law and so on. The members of the Executive Council are also official members of one or other of the two Houses of the Central Legislature but are not responsible to it, nor, hitherto, have they been chosen from among its elected members. They are, in fact, appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Governor-General. Before 1919, the rule was that one of the

Members of Council should be an Indian, but now there are no statutory directions as to the numbers of Indian members and the whole Council could legally be composed of them.

The Governor-General in Council is, in a very real sense, the ruler of India. He is the mainspring of the administration and has the power to initiate and carry out a policy which sets the conditions under which the government of the whole country, both at the centre and in the provinces, is carried on. In his own person he concentrates certain powers of vast importance. In times of crisis, as we have seen at the end of 1931 and the beginning of 1932, he can issue Ordinances, which have the force of law, arming the Executive with any powers necessary to cope with the danger out of which the Ordinance arose. This power may be exercised after the refusal of the Legislature to vest the Executive with the necessary powers, or may be used without any prior appeal to the Legislature. The discussion later, in this book, of the Ordinances issued by Lord Irwin, will show how immense and wide-reaching is this side of the Governor-General's personal powers. A less drastic, but, nevertheless, extensive power in the Governor-General's hands, is the power to certify legislation which the Legislature itself has rejected. On him, Parliament has fixed the definite responsibility for the 'safety, tranquillity, or interest of British India,' and has rightly given him the powers necessary to enable him to discharge his responsibility. The power of certification is one of these.

The power of appropriation refers to the financial side of the work of the Legislature. If the latter refuses to sanction any particular demand, the Governor-

General may, if he thinks it necessary, appropriate the required sum by his own authority

Except that his ultimate constitutional responsibility is not to the people and legislature of the country which he governs, but to another people and another legislature, the Governor-General's position bears some resemblance to that of the President of the United States. The President's ministers, for example, like members of the Governor-General's Executive Council, are not chosen from among the members of the Legislature and are not responsible to it, whilst the President's power of veto, again, is as real as the Governor-General's power of certification. As it happens, the power to certify legislation has been used only once or twice during the ten years which have passed since the 1919 Act was brought into operation, whereas the veto in the United States has been very commonly used.

Day by day, a stream of office files and papers flows into the Viceroy's office from the different departments of the Government of India, and every member in charge of a department and the secretary—the head of the permanent official staff, that is—of each department has an interview once a week with the Viceroy, at which the more important items of the department's work are discussed. In this way, the Viceroy keeps abreast of all that his Government is doing, his influence is all-pervasive, and his orders, when he issues them, decisive.

Major questions of policy, or action to be taken to meet sudden crises or emergencies are discussed and settled at meetings of the Executive Council where the Viceroy takes the chair and controls the proceedings.

Even *vis a vis* his Council his authority is supreme and he can overrule the opinion of all his colleagues if the occasion warrants his doing so

This review, which will be fully illustrated later, of the Viceroy's powers and functions, brief as it is, will enable the reader to understand the scope and reality of the Viceroy's authority as chief executive in India, and will enable him also to understand why Lord Irwin was able to take the policy of his Government with regard to the Round Table Conference so fully into his own hands from 1929 onwards. But there is another side to his office which will appear very clearly as we study the events of the past five years. For he has to temper the asperities of the existing system of government, and must take the leading part in moulding it to the shape in which it will fit easily and securely in the framework of the dominion government of the future. A great part of the driving energy in educational, social and political progress must come from him. His position is one of extreme responsibility, for he is the point of contact of two sometimes opposing forces—the will of the British Government and the will of the Indian Legislature. The comparison between Lord Elgin in Canada and Lord Irwin in India is strangely attractive to one who studies British Imperial history, and it appeals with striking force at this point. The closing words of the last official despatch which Lord Elgin wrote from Quebec are as true and as applicable to current conditions in India as they were to Canadian conditions eighty years ago.

‘I readily admit,’ he writes, ‘that the maintenance of the position and due influence of the Governor is one

of the most critical problems that have to be solved in the adaptation of Parliamentary Government to the Colonial system, and that it is difficult to overestimate the importance which attaches to its satisfactory solution. As the Imperial Government and Parliament gradually withdraw from legislative interference, and from the exercise of patronage in Colonial affairs, the office of Governor tends to become, in the most emphatic sense of the term, the link which connects the Mother Country and the Colony, and his influence the means by which harmony of action between the local and imperial authorities is to be preserved. It is not, however, by evincing an anxious desire to stretch to the utmost constitutional principles in his favour, but, on the contrary, by the frank acceptance of the conditions of the Parliamentary system, that his influence can be most surely extended and confirmed. Placed by his position above the strife of parties—holding office by a tenure less precarious than the ministers who surround him—having no political interests to serve but that of the community whose affairs he is appointed to administer—his opinion cannot fail, when all cause for suspicion and jealousy is removed, to have great weight in the Colonial Councils, while he is set at liberty to constitute himself in an especial manner the patron of those larger and higher interests, for example, as those of education, and of moral and material progress in all its branches which, unlike the interests of party, unite instead of dividing the body politic. The mention of such influences as an appreciable force in the administration of public affairs may provoke a sneer on the part of persons who have no faith in any appeal which is not

addressed to the lowest motives of human conduct; but those who have juster views of our common nature, and have seen influences that are purely moral wielded with judgment, will not be disposed to deny to them a high degree of efficacy.'

I have quoted this extract at length, partly because of the intrinsic truth of its words, and partly because of their unique authority, coming as they do from the pen of the man who first showed the world how it was possible to have responsible government in a colony, together with membership of a world-wide Commonwealth of Nations. It is an ideal exposition of the Viceroy of India's position to-day as Lord Irwin himself expounded it to the Indian Legislature on one important occasion.

The Act of 1919 started India on the first steps towards federation by making her Government a quasi-federation. The provinces, which are destined to occupy much the same position in India as the states do in Australia and in the United States of America, were given a good deal of autonomy by the division of powers between them and the Central Government. To the latter were entrusted such subjects of government as defence, customs, currency and coinage, foreign relations, and so on, in fact, those powers which, from their nature, must be administered by national Governments everywhere. But the provinces were given the administration of all those subjects which touch the daily life and the welfare of the citizen most nearly, and, in India, have been given the expressive and not unjustified name of the 'nation-building' subjects. Among these are education, public health,



sanitation and local self-government, and these are not only provincially administered subjects, but, by the arrangements known as 'dyarchy,' are controlled by ministers chosen from among the elected members of the provincial legislative councils and responsible to these for their administration and policy. The Act of 1919 requires the 'previous sanction' of the Government of India to certain classes of legislation affecting the transferred departments, but, apart from this, it is broadly true to say that neither the Government of India nor the Secretary of State could interfere with the working of these 'transferred' departments except under the urge of the most vital necessity. Indeed, no such intervention could take place without provoking a constitutional crisis in the province concerned. Of the departments which have not been transferred to ministers in the provinces, but remain in the hands of the Governor and his Executive Council, who are not responsible for their policy or actions to the provincial legislatures, the most important is the vital function of the maintenance of law and order. In the case of this, and of the other 'reserved' departments, the chain of executive authority runs unbroken from Governor to Secretary of State and Parliament. Readers who have followed Indian affairs closely, cannot have failed to notice that Mr. Gandhi's arrest, for example, has to be sanctioned by the Government of India—that is, by the Governor General in Council—although the offences against the law for which he is arrested are committed within the confines of some province or other, and would normally be dealt with by the Provincial Government concerned. In other words, the autonomy of the Provincial Government is distinctly limited in

all matters concerning the internal peace and tranquillity of India.

The provinces and their people will appear only fitfully in the pages which follow, but it is in them that the citizen is brought daily and hourly into touch with the workings of government, and in them that the solid, constructive, and, for the most part, unobtrusive processes of nation-building in India are being carried on. Unheralded, and unknown to the outer world, the most vital developments in education, local self-government, and all the other activities of government which are devoted to the making of good citizens and the furthering of the moral and material welfare of a people are going on. Since 1921, when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were inaugurated, these developments have proceeded at a constantly accelerating pace. Even the face of the once placid waters of rural India is now stirred, and the movements and events at the centre, with which we are to be chiefly concerned, begin in the strong, eager currents of thought and feeling, bubbling up from the life of the provinces, are fed by their original force, and are but transformed into the technique of a more sophisticated and concentrated agitation by men as skilled in handling these dangerous commodities as an electrician is in handling electrical energy. Wherever we look in India we see this stir of new life in the provinces, and through the swiftly moving and changing screen of events and developments at the centre, we see the *primum mobile* of the provinces and their life and their movements.

How could such a creative development as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms fail to produce mighty repercussions in India, prepared as she was for their

coming by long years of continuous progress of all kinds as we have seen in earlier pages of this book? For creative the Reforms were—as they were meant to be. Their authors avowedly designed to disturb the ‘pathetic contentment’ of the Indian masses and they succeeded in their design with a vengeance. At the beginning of 1926 India was, politically, in a state of equilibrium, to borrow a phrase from the economists, but we know now that the equilibrium was unstable, which is the same as saying that it was temporary. The history of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms up to 1926 is the background of our own canvas and we shall see our picture in a better perspective if we indicate the background in a few swift strokes.

It was fortunate for India and the Empire that the office of Viceroy was, throughout the critical first five years of the Reforms, in the hands of a statesman of Lord Reading’s calibre. It was on 9th February 1921 that the Duke of Connaught inaugurated the Reforms, and it was on 3rd April that Lord Reading assumed office. Even in the most favourable combination of circumstances possible, both in India and elsewhere, the task confronting him would have been one of uncommon difficulty and magnitude, for he was called upon to start on its way, and keep steady on its course, not merely a new system of administration. His was the infinitely more difficult task of transplanting an offshoot of the most highly developed and subtle political Constitution in existence to the alien soil of India. The causes which made inevitable the introduction into India of advanced political institutions of a Western type has been disclosed in preceding pages, but, of course, the *fait accompli* of the 1919 Reforms

had not destroyed those conditions adverse to them which so exercised in 1919—and still exercise in 1932—the minds of all who have the welfare of India at heart. The political, social, religious, and cultural disunity of India could not be effaced by the passing of an Act of Parliament. In a word, the intrinsic difficulties of the problem of adapting India's new Constitution to her existing conditions were such as to demand the highest qualities of statesmanship in the Viceroy who had to grapple with them. Before ever the Reforms came into operation, considerable opposition was shown to them, for different reasons, by influential sections of both British and Indian opinion. The British opponents of the Reforms pointed, of course, to the notorious historic antagonism between the two chief communities in India, to India's political disarticulation, to her numerous depressed classes—about forty millions of them—and to her backwardness in some respects as compared with the country whose very highly developed political institutions she hoped to receive after as short an interval as possible.

The reasons for the widespread opposition to the 1919 Reforms displayed by Indians are not so simply stated. There was then, as there is now, an irreconcilable faction which will never be satisfied with anything less than complete and immediate independence of British rule. But this was only a microscopic fraction of the whole population of the country. A vastly wider circle, justly proud of the prowess of the Indian Army during the War, and deeply influenced by the prevailing ideas of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination, had expected something more spectacular than the provisions of the Act of 1919, for,

of course, that Act, like all British constitutional documents, does not express its most important and far-reaching implications, but leaves them to be found and understood by patient work and zealous patriotism. Actually, as we know, the germ of ultimate complete responsible self government was present in the 1919 Act, but this is so typically English a document that its scope and possibilities can be perceived only by those who have made a close study of the English Constitution and English Parliamentary methods. It was natural enough, therefore, that very many people, in India and elsewhere, looking no further than the mere wording of the Act, should feel that the labouring mountain had produced nothing more than a mouse.

These intrinsic difficulties were formidable, but they were mightily reinforced by a number of extrinsic difficulties which, in combination, not only menaced the progress of the reformed Constitution, but, even, threatened the continued existence in India of any stable form of government. Lastly, between 1919, when the Act received the sanction of Parliament, and 1921, when its provisions came into force, by the events of the early summer of 1919 in the Punjab, in Delhi, and in certain other parts of India, notably in the Bombay Presidency. Here, fortunately, there is no need to lift the curtain which hangs between us and those sombre days when acts of violence were met by stern repression and the shadow of Amritsar lengthened over the land. But their results lived on after them, and, particularly in their manifestation in the widespread, stubborn and menacing non-co-operation movement, were to exercise a profound influence on the greater part of Lord Reading's administration.

Throughout 1920 this movement had grown in strength and had allied itself with the equally menacing Khilafat agitation in which the Muhammadans of India showed their resentment at the terms of peace offered by the Allies to the conquered Turks. No other Viceroy had ever assumed office in such unpromising circumstances, for the non-co-operation movement and the Khilafat agitation were an assault directed against the very fabric of government in India. They made a powerful appeal, not only to the patriotism and idealism of India and not only to ignorance and passion, but to things deep in the recesses of the Oriental mind and character into which no Westerner can penetrate. They were not amenable to reason or the logic of facts. While the storm raged, it was as much as Lord Reading and his Government could do to keep their ship's head to the wind. Literally, the burden on the administration during 1921 and the next few years was all but intolerable, and occasional lapses into anarchy here and there in India showed the terrible dangers to which the country was daily exposed.

In the Madras Presidency all the combustible elements gathered together by two years of agitation blazed up suddenly in the autumn of 1921 into the fierce uprising of the Moplahs, a fanatical Muhammadan folk who live on the west coast. Rising almost *en masse*, they flooded over the settlements of their Hindu neighbours, murdering and forcibly converting them, until checked by concentrations of police and regular troops. Lesser, but, nevertheless, very dangerous and destructive outbreaks took place elsewhere in India. Even the Sikhs, with their fine traditions of gallant

military service and unswerving loyalty to the British Government, had, shortly before Lord Reading arrived in India, started their 'Akali' (religious warrior) movement, which began as an attempt to reform the administration of their religious foundations and places of worship, and ended by becoming, in effect, a militant off-shoot of the non-co-operation movement. During the first years of Lord Reading's viceroyalty, this movement was to prove one of the greatest anxieties both of the Government of the Punjab and of the Government of India. In these and other similar related phenomena may be seen the forerunners of events and circumstances destined to give a political bias to ancient religious and social differences, and, ultimately, to produce those inter-communal rivalries and claims which to-day are one of the most potent of the difficulties in the way of a solution of the Indian political problem.

Naturally, these violent convulsions throughout the country had a reflex in a general rise in the figures of crime, particularly of violent crime such as murders and gang robberies, and the strain on the police from 1921 onwards became severe. Crime began to rise in every province, and, in some provinces, the figures for these years are among the highest on record. Also during the months which immediately followed Lord Reading's assumption of office began to appear the first rifts in the Hindu-Muhammadan Entente, which had been one of the most striking features of the earlier phase of the non-co-operation movement, and in 1922 the Entente received its death-blow.

Another problem of the first magnitude—one which has led to considerable bitterness in India—whose

solution is still only partially achieved, was coming prominently into notice once more in 1921. This was the problem of the status of Indian nationals in certain parts of the British Empire and notably in South and East Africa. This problem has been an important influence in shaping and fostering the modern Indian Nationalist Movement, and in raising the demand for improvement of status of which mention has already been made.

Again, the first budgets of the reformed Government of India and of most of the provinces anticipated serious deficits. Trade was depressed, and the price of food soaring. The conditions of the country, partly from economic and partly from political causes, was such that there was complete stagnation of the ordinary activities of internal trade. The repercussions of the ensuing financial stringency on the reforms were serious in the extreme, for lack of money destroyed many of the bright hopes with which Indian politicians and people had entered on the working of the new system of government. Even in the provinces where there was dyarchy, the finance departments, the watchdogs of the provincial revenues, were on the reserved side, and it was found impossible to obviate the growth of wide and deep suspicion that the transferred, or, as they are often called, the 'nation-building' departments were being deliberately starved of resources, and in some provinces, a permanent and most unfortunate bias was given to the course of the reforms. But worst of all was that part of the non-co-operation creed which forbade the strongest and best organised political party in India, the 'Swarajist' (Home Rule) or, as it is now called, the Congress Party, to enter the newly created



central and provincial legislative bodies. The boycotting of the legislatures by this very important body of opinion not only robbed the experiment in self-government represented by the Act of 1919 of a great part of its usefulness and of its power to absorb and transmute into healthy activity the Indian aspirations for political progress which were all the time gathering momentum, but also erected uncompromising and automatic opposition to all the Acts of Government into a creed, firmly held and invariably applied, by an active, ubiquitous and influential body of politicians and their followers. There was a vast amount of important work lying ready to the hands of the Indian legislators, had some chosen, and had others been able, to take it up. The machinery of government was badly in need of adjustment and repairs. Developmental work, which had of necessity been shelved during the War, had to be resumed or initiated, and the conditions of service in the major Government services needed to be brought into line with the changed conditions, economic and political, set up by the great upheaval. In these and in other directions too numerous to mention, there was urgent need for co-operation between Government and governed, and one great section of the governed would not co-operate. It was as though a motor lorry should have to drag a heavy load up a hill with one of its cylinders out of action. The work was not done as it had been hoped that it would be done. And, worse, the Reforms of 1919, instead of functioning steadily and broadening from precedent to precedent into the responsible self-government which was the vision of the best minds in Britain and India, developed into something perilously

like a battle-field, with the Government on the one side and Congress and allied groups on the other as the protagonists, where now one party and now the other gained the advantage. It was warfare, moreover, of which the results, as is usual in war, did not show themselves until long after the dust and clamour of conflict had subsided.

It is with an effort that the historian of these later years of destiny in India turns from the years before 1926, during which so many of the conditions of the work of Lord Irwin and his successors were being set. Not easily can a service, done by one man for another, be imagined greater than that done by Lord Reading for his successor. For the greater part of the five years between 1921 and 1926, the ship of state had been repeatedly battered by storms from all parts of the compass, but Lord Reading, with statesmanship and quality of courage and intellect which would have compelled literally world-wide admiration had attention in Europe and America and elsewhere not been so largely engaged in post-War problems and reconstruction, kept his craft steadily on her course and handed her over in sound and seaworthy trim. But, as the reader will perceive from what has been said above, though storm after storm had been safely and masterfully ridden out, the lull at the end of Lord Reading's viceroyalty was no more than a temporary one. To continue our metaphor, the barometer was still falling, and clouds were already gathering in whose womb fresh disturbances were forming.

These disturbances were destined to be mostly internal to India itself, and all of them—even the inter-communal troubles—to be closely bound up with the

great main problem of the future relations between India and Great Britain, which is only another way of saying the problem of the future government of India. Lord Irwin, even at the moment of his arrival in India, was not unconscious of the imminence of these troubles, and, indeed, one of them which gave him very great anxiety during the first half of his viceroyalty, namely, Hindu-Muhammadan antagonism, showed itself in some of the worst riots of modern years in the same month in which he arrived in India. Also, Lord Irwin knew that he was destined to play a part of the highest importance in the great drama of Britain's connection with India. The Government of India Act of 1919 provided for a Statutory Enquiry into the working of the system of government in India after a period of ten years, and half that period had gone by before he left England. Important sections of Indian political opinion other than the Congress were anxious to have the enquiry expedited, and in the Indian Central Legislature and on innumerable public platforms insistent demands had been made not only for the immediate institution of the Statutory Enquiry but also for definite and sweeping constitutional changes. In September 1925, the Indian Legislative Assembly, on the motion of the Congress Party, had adopted the so called 'National Demand,' which, in effect, was a demand that His Majesty's Government should meet the representatives of Indian political opinion at a Round Table Conference for the purpose of drawing up and passing into law forthwith a Constitution conferring full dominion status on India. Meanwhile, both in Bengal and in the Central Provinces, the extremest elements had managed to prevent

the dyarchy constitution from functioning for a time, whilst elsewhere, with rare exceptions, it was worked with increasing difficulty and against ever-increasing friction. A General Election at the end of 1926 was to return more than one-third of the elected members of the Legislative Assembly from the Congress Party, and to give this and allied or sympathetic political groups strong representation in most of the Provincial Legislative Councils. All over India, newspaper and other criticism of the system of government in India was becoming, month by month, more ubiquitous and more extreme, and, in short, it was clear that the British rule was about to be challenged again, and in a manner more searching and sustained than by the old non-co-operation agitation. As it happened, the occasion for the challenge was to be provided by the appointment of the Statutory Commission referred to above, the first preparations for which were entered upon within a very few months of Lord Irwin's assumption of office. Probably nobody, whether British or Indian, believed that the present system of government in India would be ratified by the Statutory Commission or that things could be left indefinitely as they were. Some there were who hoped that the obvious shortcomings of the 1919 Reforms would lead to a step backwards, possibly to a restoration of the old Morley-Minto Councils. By no means all of those who thought in this way were British, but the hope was a futile, impossible one. The vast majority of the people knew that there would have to be some change from the present system, and, moreover, a change in a forward direction, but the extent and kind of change demanded varied from one section of political thought

to another. But whatever else was uncertain, this much was certain that of all persons concerned, whether on the British side or the Indian, the Viceroy of India would have to bear the greatest burden and assume the heaviest responsibility. The description of the present system of government in India contained earlier in this chapter shows the reason for this. Standing, as he does, at the very point where India and Britain meet, the Viceroy's views, personality, and policy are, perforce, one of the strongest elements in the complex of rival ideas, claims and emotions, the matrix from which a policy of political and constitutional progress for India has to be extracted. Of course, a weak man in the Viceroy's position could act merely as the transmitter or the exponent of the views of the British Government, but Lord Irwin was not a weak man, and very shortly after his arrival in India it was clear to him that in the years ahead he would be called upon to play a part and embark on a course of action of fateful consequence to India and the Empire. For him there could be no question of merely carrying on, of keeping the chariot of government on its wheels whilst others supplied its motive force and controlled its direction.

In this we find the essence of the task awaiting Lord Irwin in India, and the burden of his work. Problems of domestic administration and development, social, economic and other, were, as we shall see, to crowd upon him. External and frontier relations, at one period of his viceroyalty, were to assume high importance. Relations between his Government and the President and a portion of the opposition in the Indian Legislature at one time became so strained as

to threaten the success of that Round Table Conference which was to prove the culminating point of his policy, and civil disobedience, rioting and anarchical crime were to cloud his last months in India. Nevertheless, all these are subservient to, indeed, most of them are factors in the main task and the great problem which he set himself to achieve and solve, namely, the creation of a constructive, progressing and automatic evolving policy of reconciliation of Britain's rights and obligations in India, with the insistent and natural claims of Indian nationality

## CHAPTER V

### PARTIES AND PERSONALITIES IN INDIA

It must be all but impossible for even the most intelligent reader who has no first-hand knowledge of Indian affairs to follow with any real comprehension the daily budgets of news from India. The names of parties and persons appear over and over again, but how many people know what they stand for? The Congress Party and Mr. Gandhi are obviously the chief and strongest opposition to the Government of India. The minority communities are just as obviously their chief support. But how are we to know what the strength of Congress really is, and, still more, how are we to know what the Nationalist, and Responsive Co-operators, and Liberals, and the Justice Party, and other titles mean? Unless these things are understood the story of Indian political developments during these years is written in cipher. A description of personalities and parties in India is therefore of outstanding importance.

The Congress Party is the best organised and most powerful political party in India. Ostensibly a party for all communities and interests, it is, in fact, almost entirely a Hindu party, and from its beginning in the middle 'eighties has never been anything but predominantly Hindu. It is a closely knit organisation, with sub-divisions in every province, and still smaller local sub-divisions in many of the big towns. Its

executive body is the Working Committee which draws its members from all over the country. Until a quarter of a century ago, its interest in politics was not much more than academic, but the agitation against the partition of Bengal in the first decade of this century brought life and vigour into the All-India Congress, and since that time its policy and opinions have become more and more extreme year by year. Its regular membership is comparatively small. Nobody can say at any one moment exactly how many members the Congress Party has, but it has proved itself able, time after time, to rouse the Hindu masses in the towns, and, of late years, in the villages, at times of political unrest or excitement. Undoubtedly, its present power in this direction is given to it by Mr. Gandhi, whose name is potent with the masses. Also, in periods of economic stress the Congress workers do not hesitate to appeal to the crudest racial instincts, and such an appeal is powerful all the world over. It may be assumed, then, that at any given moment the All-India National Congress can, if it chooses, plunge great tracts of the country into disturbance more or less violent, according to the circumstances prevailing. Outside India, the belief is widely current that Congress is a democratic party. This is literally the exact reverse of the truth. The Congress Party is pre-eminently the party of privilege and vested interest. The success of the Congress Party's agitation would mean the replacement of British rule by the rule of a theocratic and plutocratic oligarchy. Further, the Congress Party adopted some, and anticipated other, features of the characteristic technique of Fascism. In spite of the adoption of non-violence, of which we



have heard so much during the past few years, the Congress organisation consistently uses violent means to repress opposition and to cow or punish its antagonists. Genuine representatives of labour, whether urban or rural, and representatives of the Depressed Classes, for example, have no part or lot in the control of any of even the local branches of the Congress Party, for this is firmly held in the hands of classes privileged by birth and wealth. It is a profound mistake, then, to regard the Congress Party as in any sense a democratic party. Demagogy and democracy have a certain similarity in sound, but there the resemblance between the two things ends, and demagogy is one of the chosen instruments of Congress agitation. This is one of the reasons, indeed, the main reason, why the Congress Party, from time to time, suffers grievous splits in its ranks. As events and opinion develop, the more practical and sincere men among its leaders tend always to turn away from it and look for a path to more constructive work, even if this should mean co operation with the British Government.

At the beginning of 1926, apart from inter-communal troubles, there was very little animation in Indian politics or in Indian public life generally. Passions and energies had spent themselves in the fierce disturbances mentioned in the last chapter, and a time of recuperation and preparation was necessary before any agitation on a national scale could be attempted. The opposition to the Government of India had become temporarily demoralised owing to the success with which Lord Reading had dealt with the unconstitutional and violent phases of the non-co-operation agitation, and a certain disintegration had taken place in the opposing

forces in which, at one time, most communities and sections of opinion in India had seemed to be so solidly united. This disintegration had occurred not only in the Hindu-Muhammadan unity of non-cooperation days, but also within the ranks of the Hindus themselves, and even within the hitherto solid Congress, or Swaraj Party, itself. Splits had occurred between some of the more important leaders of the Party, partly on personal grounds, but, far more generally and importantly, on account of genuine differences of opinion with regard to political action and tactics. The reasons for these fissiparous tendencies in the powerful Left Wing of organised Indian politics might well detain us for a few moments, for they are important and go right down to the roots of our study. Like so many other features of Indian politics, they derive very largely from the personalities of political leaders, who call the tune to which the country dances. Unquestionably the greatest leaders of the Left in Indian politics during the last two decades have been the late Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mr. C. R. Das, and Mr. Gandhi himself. Mr. Tilak may fairly be described as the first All-India politician of the new model men whose interests were primarily and virtually in politics, who looked not for readjustments or improvements in the existing system of government, but for root and branch reforms. He also was the first to conceive and organise consistent action directed towards the achievement of nothing less than Home Rule for India. The word 'Swaraj,' now so well known as the synonym for Home Rule, was coined by him, and his criticism was directed against the very bases and sanctions of British rule in India. Naturally, his career was a stormy one,

and controversy has raged over the subject of the degree of responsibility which can attach to him for the introduction into India of revolutionary forms of crime, familiar enough in the troubled histories of Western nations but almost, if not entirely, unknown in India before the last decade of the nineteenth century. There can be little doubt that Mr. Tilak himself was too big a man to identify himself with any subterranean criminal activities, and he must be absolved from instigating or countenancing them. Nevertheless, the fact remains that revolutionary crime did make its first appearance under British rule as one of the *sequelæ* of his agitation and has now become endemic in the country. But Mr. Tilak was far more than a mere agitator. He was a statesman fully alive to the practical possibilities of the situation and to the best interests of his country, and towards the end of his life his mind turned more and more towards the best and truest outcome of his long labours, namely, co-operation and partnership with the British in the high task of elevating India to full national stature. He it was who coined the phrase 'responsive co-operation,' on which, as we shall see shortly, the Congress Party split from top to bottom in 1924, and, had he been alive to-day, there is very little doubt that he would be at the Round Table Conference, playing a powerful constructive part in its work. Death, however, removed him from the scene a few years before Lord Irwin's arrival.

Very similar in character and attributes was the late Mr. C. R. Das, the Bengali leader who died in the summer of 1925. He was a man of powerful intellect and great force of character, who saw quite clearly that it was not enough to attempt to smash the existing

system of administration. He saw, probably more clearly than any other of the great Indian leaders, that the most important part of a building is its foundations, and he gave much of his thought and energy to the problem of laying firmly the foundations of a future Indian polity in rehabilitated and revitalised village communities. He rose to the height of his fame and power during, and immediately after, the non-cooperation agitation, and the measure of his greatness can be appreciated by his behaviour after the non-cooperation storm had died down. By that time the Montagu-Chelmsford Legislatures and Reforms had had time to establish themselves, and Mr. Das, as we shall see, perceived in a moment that the centre of gravity of Indian domestic politics was now inside and not outside these legislatures. Over the question of the entry of the Congress Party into the new legislatures, Mr. Das, assisted by the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, fought and defeated Mr. Gandhi and forced him into retirement from Indian politics for some years. But, far more than this, Mr. Das, at the end of his life, saw the true meaning and character of the British Empire, and realised how immeasurably better India's future would be if she achieved dominion status in the British Commonwealth rather than strove to tread the dangerous and, in all probability, disastrous path to independence outside the Commonwealth. He saw clearly enough the immense dangers, both internal and external, of this latter course, and at the end of his life he did not hesitate to declare his faith. In the very last speech which he made, a speech delivered at Faridpur in Bengal only a few weeks before his death, Mr. Das conveyed the fruits of his mature

reflections to his audience in one of the noblest apologia for the essential character and purpose of the British Commonwealth of Nations which has ever been delivered by any citizen of that Commonwealth, the words of which have been already quoted on page 25.

It cannot be doubted that Lord Irwin's policy would have made an instant appeal to such a man who, had he lived, might well have been instrumental in making the history of India during the last five years much more happy than it has been.

There is no need to discuss Mr. Gandhi's personality at any length, for circumstances during the past few years have combined to make him one of the best-known figures in the world. Mr. Gandhi's appeal to his own people and to the outer world is entirely emotional. Mr. Tilak and Mr. Das appealed primarily to the intellects and to the ambitions and material interests of their own people, and both of them devoted much thought to the constructive and practical side of their work. This side is completely absent from Mr. Gandhi's mind. Time after time he has demonstrated his ability to rouse mass unrest throughout India which has invariably led to disorder and bloodshed. To do him justice, Mr. Gandhi deplures and hates these results as much as anybody else, but he has never been able to put forward an alternative programme to mere agitation and destruction of the existing order. On each occasion when Mr. Gandhi might have participated with effective force in constitutional methods of agitation for political reforms, he has turned away into the wilderness of mere non-co-operation, only to return again with the same barren, negative programme. Let it be clearly under-

stood that a sharp division must be drawn between estimates of Mr Gandhi the man and Mr Gandhi the politician. As a man Mr Gandhi is justly revered by millions. As a politician, he is a sham, and a dangerous sham. He is dangerous because the prestige which he has acquired through his personal characteristics is attached to him in his capacity of politician, and earns for him the enthusiastic, indeed, the fanatical support of men and women who would not support his political tactics for one moment if they were not dazzled by the glamour of Gandhi the man and saint. Over the hearts and minds of millions of his fellow-countrymen Mr Gandhi still exercises a compelling influence, but an influence not so strong now as it was at the end of 1924 when he finally abandoned his contest with Mr C R Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru and retired from politics for four years. Naturally, the departure of such a figure from the political scene, after a somewhat embittered fight with his two chief lieutenants and foremost pillars of the Congress Party, proved a cause of demoralisation and disintegration in that party. The results of this demoralisation were not slow to show themselves, for in 1924 the larger section of the Congress Party, which had followed Pandit Motilal Nehru, suffered a further division by the secession of a well-known group of Congress leaders, most of whom belonged to the powerful and martial Mahratta community of Central India. This group seceded on an issue of fundamental importance, which was this. The original intention of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr C R Das in entering the Legislatures with their followers was to adopt purely obstructive tactics, and thus, in their own phrase, to wreck the

Reforms from within Certainly, at that time, they had no intention of allowing their followers to take any part in the working of the Constitution by accepting ministerships or seats in the various Executive Councils, Central and Provincial Now, however, the Mahratta politicians, adopting the policy and phrase of Mr Tilak, himself a Mahratta, declared that this purely negative policy was not enough They wanted to co operate in any action or policy which they believed to be clearly and entirely in the interests of India A fierce dispute took place in public between Pandit Motilal Nehru and the dissenting Mahratta leaders, who, in the end, won their own way and formed a new political party, afterwards known as the Nationalist Party For the next few years after this second split in the Congress Party purely personal considerations had much to do with the groupings of opinion in Hindu politics, and, for a while, much of the effectiveness of the old solid Congress Party was lost Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1926, and throughout the whole of Lord Irwin's period of office, Pandit Motilal Nehru remained the leading and most formidable of the Indian politicians opposing the Indian Government, although in particular areas, notably in parts of Bombay, in Bengal, and in Madras, his influence was overshadowed by that of local leaders

In appearance, Pandit Motilal Nehru strikingly resembled a Roman patrician, and the resemblance was enhanced by the toga like white garment, made of rough homespun, which he always wore In subtlety of intellect, and in force and lucidity of exposition, in deadly powers of debate, and in an almost magic

capacity for seizing and exploiting the weak points of his opponents, the Pandit was entirely Brahmin. At one time he was a great admirer of English life and social customs, and himself an honoured participator in the social life of the British officials and their society in his Province. But in his later years he turned away from all this. He abandoned his stylish European clothes, made by the best and most expensive London tailors, and the fine linen which he used to send every week to Paris to be washed, and took to the traditional garb of his class and kind, at the same time withdrawing himself more and more from merely social contact with Europeans into the life and politics and ideals of his own people. After the death of Mr. Das, and in the absence of Mr. Gandhi from the stage, Pandit Motilal Nehru was the outstanding figure in organised Indian politics at the time of Lord Irwin's arrival in India. By birth an aristocrat and in temperament a Conservative, Motilal Nehru was in no sense a revolutionary, but the circumstances of the next five years were to push him more and more towards the Left, and in his progress Leftwards he was undoubtedly influenced by his son, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Jawaharlal Nehru is, at the present moment, one of the most interesting figures in Indian politics, although he has very little of his father's moral greatness. His reputation in politics has been made since the end of the War, and it seems unlikely that he is destined to a long or successful career in the future. An ex-member of the Harrow School Cadet Corps and once an ardent Anglophile, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has now one secret ambition, which is to rival Lenin or Stalin in the history of communism. He has, of course, paid the



usual flying visit to Moscow, and for the last few years he has been trying to apply the lessons thus taught to him to the tenantry of the United Provinces in which his home is situated. He flits about the pages of the history of these years as the organiser of the Youth Movement, the proposer of extremist resolutions at annual meetings of the All-India National Congress, as leader of a No Rent campaign in a time of agricultural depression, and, generally, as a fisher wherever the waters are troubled. It seems, however, that history will write him down as a pinchbeck Lenin, and he has a younger and dangerous rival for the plaudits of the mob in a would-be Mussolini in Bengal—Mr Subash Chandra Bose. Mr Bose holds the Bengal extremists on his side just as others hold the extremists of the Punjab, Bombay, Madras, and various other provinces. In fact, the crown of All-India leadership is continually being split up to provide pieces for the fashioning of a number of local provincial crowns for ambitious aspirants.

The truth is that the younger men who have come into leading positions in Indian Left Wing politics since 1926 are not men of the same moral stature or intellectual force as the old leaders who have either disappeared or are represented by one or two stragglers who take no further effective part in public life. The older men were in the All-India National Congress movement from its beginning in 1885. They were men bred in the traditions of English liberty and English constitutional agitation, and they were prepared to submit to the hard work and severe mental discipline required for constructive thinking and planning. Until the ascent of Mr Gandhi, there had been no Indian

political leader of the first rank with a policy of mere destruction and negation. But his fame has dazzled men like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Subash Chandra Bose and a multitude of more obscure imitators, and they think that they can achieve equal fame and influence over the Hindu masses and over certain sections of world opinion by denouncing everything British and stirring up mass agitation against the settled order of government. Like Mr. Gandhi, they have nothing to propose in place of what they seek to destroy, but, unlike him, they are willing to use any methods, however violent, which are open to them.

The record of Indian politics, in fact, during the years between 1926 and 1932 is a record of steady decline in solidarity, in quality of leadership, and in ideal on the part of the whole of the Left Wing Movement, with its inevitable sequel of intensified inter-communal antagonism and popular disturbance.

We saw a little while ago how certain important leaders of the Congress Party broke away from it over the question of qualified, or responsive, co-operation with the Indian Government in the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The leaders of this secession were Mahratta Brahmins, with great influence throughout the whole of the Mahratta country in Central and Central Western India, and some of them, by virtue of their connection with the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, were men of national standing and reputation. Dr. Moonje, who is at the present moment the outstanding figure in the Mahasabha, has for some years past been the chief protagonist of the Hindu political cause and its principal spokesman against

certain of the claims made by the Moslem and other minorities His career is worthy of his pugnacious temperament As a young man, he entered Government service as a doctor in Bombay, and whilst he was so employed the South African War broke out At once, Dr Moonje volunteered his services and when the Government refused to spare him he threw up his appointment, found his way out to South Africa, and duly got up into the zone of active operations A sturdy, stocky figure, built like a typical international scrum half, Dr Moonje, with his vivacious yet determined face and square, iron-grey beard, is a fitting representative of the virile fighting race from which he springs All through these years, Dr Moonje comes more and more into prominence as the differences between the majority and minority communities in India, particularly those between Hindus and Moslems, widen and deepen, and reach down at last to the very fundamentals of any future system of government and balance of political power in India

Another figure closely associated with Dr Moonje in the Mahasabha, and, indeed, preceding him in its leadership, is the Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya The Pandit is the ideal Aryan—the Brahmin of Brahmins Rigidly orthodox, he has never swerved from the most severe tenets of the Hindu religion On this side of his life, he has never made the slightest concession to the march of modern ideas, and there are few Hindus in all India who can claim to speak with an authority equal to his on any point of Hindu religion, or sacred law, or social or personal observance Glad invariably in spotless white, even in a London November, Pandit Malaviya, with his intellectual and

aristocratic face, much fairer than that of most Southern Europeans, looks what he is, namely, the quintessence of Hindu civilisation. In the midst of an embittered debate in the Indian Assembly on some technical currency question, he does not hesitate to use a weapon drawn from the armoury of the Puranas, or, even, from the hoary antiquity of the Vedas, for, to him, the truths they contain and the lessons they teach are much more authoritative and universal than the teachings of modern scientists and economists. There is no more venerable figure in Indian Nationalist politics than his, for he was present at the birth of the All-India National Congress in 1885, and has been a first rank politician for at least a generation. He also joined the Responsive Co operators and led them in the Legislative Assembly until the last few months of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty.

Associated with Pandit Malaviya and Dr Moonje in the responsive revolt against Congress is another figure of importance in Hindu India—Mr Jayakar. A busy life in the law in Bombay, where he is one of the leaders of the Bar, has prevented Mr Jayakar from devoting as much time to politics as most of his greater colleagues, but he is nevertheless a man of great influence in the Centre Party in Indian politics—a party which will be referred to afterwards as the Nationalist Party. Essentially reasonable and urbane, and a staunch believer in compromise, Mr Jayakar is one of the most effective speakers in India and played a great part in the life of the Legislative Assembly between the years 1926 and 1931.

Continuing this survey of Indian politicians from Left to Right, we come to the Indian Liberals, or

**Moderates** In the days before the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, that is, before there were in India any real politics and organised political parties and groups, as we in the West understand them, the Liberals were in the van of Indian agitation for political reforms by constitutional methods. They always included in their ranks some of the finest intellects in India, and the late Mr Gokhale and Mr Basu were men who would have done honour to any political party anywhere in the world. Although Hindus have always predominated in the ranks of the Indian Liberals they have never lacked Moslems of social standing and high intellectual powers. But it was inevitable that the influence and effectiveness in organised politics of the Indian Liberal Party should wane as extremist views gained ground on the one side, and inter communal antagonisms on the other. For the appeal of the Indian Liberals is essentially an appeal to moderation, to controlled and orderly progress, to the broadening from precedent to precedent which has been the characteristic of English political development, and to an equitable settlement of inter communal claims, based primarily on the objective conditions of the Indian situation, and on broad logical principles of equity. Typical of the Indian Liberal policy and general attitude is the speech made by the leader of the Indian Liberals to day, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, last January, towards the end of the First Session of the Indian Round Table Conference, which will occupy our attention later on.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, like most of the leading Indian Liberals of the present day, is a lawyer of great distinction, and also, like some of his better known colleagues, has held high office in the Government.

Sir Tej Bahadur was a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council for some time, that is to say, he was one of that body which, together with the Viceroy, constitutes the Government of India under the present Constitution. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has never had any liking for unconstitutional methods of agitation, and yet he did not hesitate to advocate and join in the boycott of the Simon Commission owing to the non-inclusion of Indians on that body. Whilst he was wandering in the unfamiliar wilderness of non-co-operation, he took a leading part in drawing up the document generally known as the Nehru Report. We shall have to look at this document with some care later on, but here it may be explained briefly as the sketch of a Constitution for India such as would satisfy the Congress and allied opinion. Actually, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Pandit Motilal Nehru were the joint authors of this document, which ought to be known in fairness as the Nehru-Sapru Report. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru is at his best in reasoned and learned arguments with his intellectual peers. He has no liking or aptitude for the rough-and-tumble of the hustings, and it is possible that he does not, in his innermost heart, believe that the voice of the people is the voice of God. It is improbable, therefore, that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru will ever head the most popular political party in the Indian Parliament, and it is a pity that there is no House of Lords in India, for, in such a gathering, men like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Sastri would be able to give to their country services of the kind which only men of their quality can give.

Mr. Sastri has never been a politician, and would

resent such a title Nevertheless, his high personal qualities and the prestige which he has acquired through his efforts on behalf of Indians domiciled overseas, particularly in the British Dominions, together with his ripe learning and philosophic outlook on life, combine to make him the Nestor of the Indian Liberals and, indeed, of all sober and moderate men in India

One of the most important factors in Indian politics to day, and, indeed, throughout the whole period of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, is the Justice, or Non Brahmin, Party of Southern India This party came into existence about the beginning of the century as part of a movement to break the all but complete Brahmin ascendancy in every walk of public and social life Its main strength is in the Madras Presidency where it is perhaps, the strongest of all the political groups, but it has also attained considerable strength in the Bombay Presidency, and recently, in the Central Provinces This is a really democratic party, and although its chief aim in the past has been to ensure fair opportunities in public life and in government services for the non Brahmin castes it is not exclusive Its present leader Sir Annepu Patro, does not conceal his desire that his party shall become a real political party on Western lines, that is, a party in which mere communal affiliations mean simply nothing and where the platform is everything Already there are signs that Europeans and Moslems are attracted by the possibilities which membership of this party holds out to them, and it may be that the Justice Party will be the first to break through the limitations of various kinds which have hitherto confined member

ship of the various political groups of India to members of a particular community or a particular economic interest. Sir Annepu Patro is a man still in middle age, with years of experience of practical administration and public service to his credit. A man steeped in the law of English constitutional practice and almost Scottish in his canny, he is determined to keep his party on the broad high road of constitutional agitation and catholicity of membership, and by reason of the strength and natural foundations on which his party is built is certain to prove a powerful force in Indian political developments of the future. He is fortunate in having as his leading colleague one of the most brilliant of the younger generation of politicians—Mr Ramaswami Mudaliyar. Mr Mudaliyar would certainly be mentioned in a list of the dozen Indian delegates who made the greatest reputation for themselves at the Conference. He is, moreover, the editor of one of the best and most effective newspapers published in India, the *Justice* of Madras. In the fight for control of the Governments of Madras, Bombay, and the Central Provinces under the next reformed Constitution, the Justice Party and its leaders will play a foremost, and, in some places, a decisive part.

With the Moslem Parties and leaders we come to a very mighty element in Indian politics. We shall see how, during these years, a united Moslem Party is gradually built up out of a number of disunited and even, to some extent, antagonistic groups. Half a century ago, Sir Sayed Ahmad, one of the most revered names in the history of the Moslem community in India, sought to unite his co-religionists on the basis of friendship and co-operation with the British people.



But the time had not then come for the results of such far-seeing efforts to be achieved. Backward in education, largely suffering under economic disabilities, and tending to cling to an outworn prestige as the ancient rulers of India before the British, the Moslems preferred to leave politics to others. But the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms have altered all that. Foreshadowing as they did the coming ultimately of self-government for India and introducing a certain measure thereof, they forced even the most supine to take stock of their position and consider what it was likely to be in the future when democratic self-government should be in force and the will of the majority should be its motive power. The non-co-operation campaign of 1920 and onwards found the majority of the Moslems ranged against the Government because of their natural sympathy with the Turks and their consequent resentment of the Treaty of Sèvres. We shall see later how the Hindu-Moslem solidarity during the non-co-operation movement degenerated into the present state of affairs. All that is necessary here is to remember that a small wing of the Moslem community under the well-known Ali brothers—Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali—survived as an element in the Left Wing of Indian politics under the name of the Khilafat Committee until the end of 1928. Further, there was, for some years after the inception of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, a very definite body of opinion among the Indian Moslems which stood midway between the mass of orthodox Moslems who, on the whole, preferred to seek their aims through co-operation with the Government rather than through opposition, and those bodies which believed—and acted up

to their belief—that the only way to political progress and reform for India lay through continuous and automatic hostility to the Government and all its doings. It was this section of the Moslems which ranged itself on the same side as the Congress and other boycotting bodies when the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927, and, for a time, the differences between them and the larger number of Moslems who preferred to co-operate with the Commission were both deep and bitter. As we shall see, it was the publication of the Nehru Report in 1928 which began the process of unifying these various wings of the Moslem community, namely, the Khilafat Committee, the Centre Moslems, and the orthodox. In any case, the Moslem front is now solid, the claims of the community are definite, and their communal enthusiasm at present runs with unprecedented strength.

The death of the elder of the Ali brothers, Maulana Muhammad Ali, towards the end of the First Session of the Round Table Conference, removed one of the ablest and most picturesque of all the Moslem leaders in India. He and his brother, Maulana Shaukat Ali, had taken a leading part in the old non-co-operation movement, during the course of which they went to prison. They were both among the pioneers of the Home Rule for India Movement, and Muhammad Ali was as effective a writer and speaker as India could show. Both the Ali brothers were profoundly interested in developments in the wider world of Islam outside India, and, perhaps unsuspected by themselves until recently, it was Islam and not India which came first in their thoughts. Thus, when the publication of the Nehru Report faced them with a clear-cut issue,

namely, the acceptance of a scheme of government for India in which Moslems should be merged with their Hindu and other Indian fellow-citizens, these deep-seated loyalties emerged irresistibly. No Constitution would suit them in which the individual culture and the political and economic development of Moslems in India were not meticulously safeguarded beyond all possibility of accident. At once they, and their Khilafat Committee with them, swung back into line with their fellow Moslems. They and the Moslems of the Centre, led by Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah, continued to boycott the Simon Commission. But the driving force had gone out of their boycott. In fundamentals they were at one with the Orthodox Moslems who had never joined the boycott, and their attitude towards the Indian Government speedily became subsidiary to the grand question of how all the Moslems acting together were to achieve the ends and obtain the safeguards which they all had at heart.

The Indian Moslems have a leader who is, personally, better known to the British public than Mr Gandhi, and who is certainly to them a more congenial and attractive figure. This is His Highness the Aga Khan, sportsman and great gentleman, and now the one leader whom every section of Indian Moslems, except the handful who belong to the Congress, try to follow. The Aga Khan has, of course, tremendous religious and social prestige among Moslems in other parts of the world than India, and from time to time, when the occasion has warranted his doing so, he has intervened in Indian politics with all the prestige of his great international reputation in the world of Islam.

His peculiar strength for the Indian Moslems lies

in the fact that he has never been identified with any particular party or faction, and so has no prejudice or ancient animosity to overcome. He is not likely ever to take any continuously active part in politics inside India, but of his genuine and profound concern for the welfare and safety of Islam in that country there can be no shadow of doubt.

Another great Indian Moslem leader whose name is a household word in India but has not become familiar to the general public in this country is Sir Fazl Hussain, lately member of the Punjab Executive Council, and at present a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Sir Fazl Hussain belongs to a family which was famous in the days of the Moghuls, and he himself always carries with him some air of those spacious days. He is a man of inflexible will and immutable purpose, with a mind like a diamond which can cut its way through anything. A convinced Nationalist, he nevertheless believes that no Government in India can possibly be stable unless the mighty Moslem minority is not only safeguarded but is also convinced that its safeguards are adequate. To achieve this is Sir Fazl Hussain's objective. He has the virile Moslems of the Punjab solidly at his back, and all over India he excites the admiration and reverence of his co-religionists.

But the Punjab is full of able Moslem leaders, as might be expected, when these are the true Moslems of the old invading strains, who share with the Romans and the British a supreme faculty for administration and practical government. Sir Muhammad Shafi was one of these great Punjab names. His work on the Round Table Conference made him a familiar figure

in England. Before his death he was one of the most distinguished lawyers in India, and like Sir Fazl Hussain was a scion of a family which held rank in Moghul days. He was a veteran politician, having been a member of the now almost prehistoric Lansdowne Councils. Like Sir Fazl Hussain, he believed that the road to Home Rule for India lies through the satisfaction of Moslem demands for safeguards, and thus he was determined to achieve. Sir Muhammad held high rank in Government, having been a member of the Viceroy's Council, and his speed and subtlety in debate and his command of English marked him out as a parliamentarian of high quality.

With Sir Muhammad Iqbal we come to a Punjabi leader of a different type. Here we have something at once rugged and refined. The greatest living poet in the Persian and Urdu languages, he has written lyrics with the high quality of genius and true poetry, lyrics which will survive in the literatures of these two languages. At the same time he is one of the most downright and doughty champions of purely Moslem claims to be found in all India. Everything else is secondary to the strength and glory of Islam, and this characteristic, coupled with his poetic genius, gives him an extraordinary influence over the Moslems of the Punjab and All-India, and even in some other parts of the Islamic world.

Bengal, the other province in which Moslems form a majority of the population, has naturally produced its quota of Moslem leaders. Here, the great majority of Moslems are concentrated in Eastern Bengal, and are the descendants of people converted during the old proselytising days of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. But their leaders, the Ghuznavis, Suhrawardys, Sir Abdul Rahim, and their like, are descendants of the old noble and princely families who acted as satraps and governors of the Emperor at Delhi. They are natural leaders by virtue of their descent, their present standing and their services both to the Government and to their community. Some of these men, like many other Moslem leaders, elsewhere in India, began by being Nationalists only, without laying any particular stress on the position or the claims of their own community, and more than one of them has taken part in movements of non-co-operation or civil disobedience. But the events presently to be described which, for Moslem leaders in other parts of India, have made the safeguarding of their own community's position the one condition precedent to autonomy for India, have produced the same effects on the Bengali leaders, and among them one finds precisely the same fervour and single-minded devotion to the Moslem cause as one finds in the Punjab. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, of the Punjab, has his counterpart in Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy of Calcutta. Sir Abdullah is one of the most learned of living Orientalists. He is also a distinguished lawyer, and had he stuck to his practice at the Bar he would certainly have received the highest rewards which the legal profession can offer. But politics claimed him early, and for a time he was one of the leading Congressmen in Bengal. The Congress, however, sought to impose certain conditions of membership which Dr. Suhrawardy, as he then was, regarded as humiliating restrictions on personal liberty, and he left the party after a violent quarrel in 1925. His secession dealt a blow to the Congress Party in

Bengal, from which it cannot be said to have recovered fully even yet, for with Dr Suhrawardy departed all its influential Moslem connections

The two Ghuznavis, Sir Abdul Karim, now a member of the Bengal Government, and his brother, Halim, a leader of the Moslem Party in the Central Legislature, are both men of a purely practical turn of mind who find their work in the safeguarding of their community's position and devote themselves whole-heartedly to this objective. Therefore they are men of weight in Moslem counsels and, consequently, in Indian politics. Sir Abdur Rahim, formerly one of the most distinguished High Court judges in India, is an opponent of the Ghuznavis in the domestic politics of Bengal, but, on the whole, he is at one with them in their ideas regarding the future of their community

The Depressed Classes are only now emerging into politics, but it is impossible to doubt that their weight is going to be felt more and more as time goes on. In Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah of Madras, and Dr Ambedkar of Bombay, they have found two leaders who have already made some of the history of India during the past few years. They are both men of considerable education, Dr Ambedkar being a graduate of London University, and both of them have displayed spirit unconquerable even by thousands of years of oppression. Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah's speech in the Legislative Assembly debate on the Simon Commission, and Dr Ambedkar's bearding of Mr Gandhi at the Round Table Conference, were both expressions of a high type of moral courage. There is another Depressed Class in India to day which is all

too often overlooked, namely, the Anglo-Indians, the people of mixed blood whom earlier generations knew as Eurasians. These are the men who made and worked the Indian railways, and the Post and Telegraph services, and who have always stood, unobtrusive but valuable, by the side of the Government in times of trouble. Their leader is Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Henry Gidney, whose Irish ancestry is no doubt responsible for the fact that he is one of the stoutest fighting men in Indian politics. He has brought his community out of its isolation, has established working contacts with other minorities, and has put his people in a position to play the part which their peculiar position between British and Indians entitles them to play.

The last of the parties to be mentioned is that of the non-official Europeans. Small in numbers, these men have played an invaluable part in the development of political life in India. They were largely instrumental in starting the All-India National Congress, and they helped to keep it alive during its first critical years of infancy. Since the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms they have taken the instinctive aptitude of their race for politics into the central and provincial legislatures, where they have built up a fine tradition. Sir Campbell Rhodes, Sir Alexander Murray, Sir Hubert Carr, Colonel Crawford, Sir James Simpson, Mr. Charles Allen, and many others who could be mentioned, are men who have taken a formative part in Indian politics, and they and their followers have been by no means a mere appendix to the Government *bloc*, but have followed their convictions, and, on important occasions, have brought a note of stern reality into



political warfare Their relations with some wings of Indian political opinion have become increasingly cordial, and when at last true political parties emerge in India, it will certainly be found that the non-official Europeans have had a good deal to do with their birth

The Government itself, as we know, is not a responsible Government It is the Viceroy and his Executive Council of seven, and of these the Commander-in-Chief is primarily interested, of course, in military matters and military policy Three of the remaining six Members of Council are now always Indian, and they and their colleagues are appointed by His Majesty on the recommendation of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India In 1926 the Viceroy's Executive Council was a strong one Sir Malcolm Hailey had left not long before, but a worthy successor even to his forceful genius was found in Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member, who controlled the Assembly and kept on good terms with the Opposition by his sheer humanness He had a ripe knowledge of Indian administration, and was a master of Assembly tactics His two British colleagues, Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member, and Sir Charles Innes, Member for Railways and Commerce, were men of the same quality All three were supreme masters of their job, and they were all capable of giving more than they got in the rough and-tumble of political warfare They were just as ready to fight with the gloves off as on, and they commanded a respect which, both for their abilities and their fighting qualities, was to serve the Viceroy in very good stead during the difficult days ahead Unfortunately, they were all to disappear

from the Government of India by 1928, Sir Alexander Muddiman and Sir Charles Innes to provincial governorships, and Sir Basil Blackett to the chairmanship of the Imperial and International Communications. Of their Indian colleagues, Sir Bhupendranath Mitra, now High Commissioner for India, was easily first. Starting life in government service in a junior post, he rose by sheer ability and hard work to one of the highest posts which the Government in India can offer. He has the priceless gift of wisdom, and he could always keep in touch with the other side, even at times of the very highest tension. His advice and experience meant a good deal to a Viceroy coming out to India new to Indian conditions and ways. Sir Muhammad Habibullah, Education Member, had the same quality of wisdom as Sir Bhupendranath Mitra, and a speech from him could usually soothe the excited Opposition, particularly if that Opposition were of the Moslem community. The third Indian Member, Mr. S. R. Das, was a cousin of the great political leader, Mr. C. R. Das. He had reached his position *via* an English public school and the leadership of the Calcutta Bar, and his family connections, and his own personality, were assets of more than ordinary value to the Government of which he was a Member. Of Sir William Birdwood, the Commander-in-Chief, little need be said, for the Commander of the Anzac Corps in the Great War requires no introduction. Head of the Army in India, he was also its oldest member, and had the unquestioning loyalty and affection of all its ranks. He was not a politician and never acted as one, but his name, and his personal prestige, counted for a good deal all the same.

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Such were the men and the parties who formed the Government of India and the Opposition, or support to it, during those years. The main groupings of opinion and most of the personalities remain constant throughout the whole of our period, and this necessary prolegomena will help to an understanding of the narrative which follows.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OPENING SCENE

THE panorama of these years is filled and dominated by one towering eminence which overshadows the whole scene. This is the Round Table Conference with its preliminary of the Simon Commission, a scene now familiar to the whole world. It is true enough that the real welfare of the masses of India would have been better served had Lord Irwin and his governments, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, been able to concentrate on the pressing economic and social problems which faced them on all sides, problems which have got to be solved sooner or later unless the material conditions of India's swarming millions are to sink to a level in which no progress of any sort, political or other, will be able to take place until after calamities and upheavals unparalleled have halved their numbers and completely disintegrated their social organisation.

But circumstances forced Lord Irwin, inexorably, to give the greater part of his labour and his first thought and attention to the political problem of India's future government and her future relations with Great Britain. In the provinces, the local governments were able to proceed with much valuable work of economic, educational, medical and other kinds, but at the Centre everything else was perforce subordinated to the overriding interest of most of the politicians and members of the Legislature in the political problem.

A highly technical question of finance, such as the level at which the gold value of the rupee should be stabilised, pressing reforms in the law of the land, such as amendments to the sections of the Criminal Code, which dealt with offences by newspapers, or a new law to combat revolutionary crime, these and other matters were automatically treated by the Opposition as branches of high politics. This state of affairs was reproduced outside the Legislature, in the newspapers, on public platforms, at meetings of municipal and local bodies, and even in university and school lecture halls and class-rooms. In a word, the literate and vocal elements in the Indian population related all their public, administrative, social, economic and, in a large part, even their religious interests to the all-pervading political question. Thus, it was inevitable that the problem of India's political future and the innumerable practical problems of day-to-day administration, arising out of it, should occupy by far the greater part of the attention of the Indian Government from 1926 onwards, and claim its attention more and more as the years passed.

We have seen something of the texture of Indian politics, and we know that inter-communal relations, more particularly the relations between Hindus and Moslems, are the warp, nothing less, of the whole fabric. The Hindu-Moslem question dominates all our period, and, appropriately enough, gave Lord Irwin his first introduction to Indian politics, for, within a day or two of his landing in Bombay, there broke out in Calcutta a riot between Hindus and Moslems which was to prove one of the fiercest and most prolonged of such clashes in the history of British

India. This was the prelude to eighteen months of rioting and murderous affrays between the members of the two communities all over India, with their storm centres in the Punjab, in Bengal, and in the United Provinces, that is, in those places where the proportion of Moslems is highest. Looking back to the early part of 1926 after a lapse of nearly six years, it is very difficult to appreciate the extent to which, even then, the antagonism between the two great communities filled the public life of the country and held the minds and thoughts of the people. But it was the outstanding feature of the public life of the country, and, indeed, in the period which elapsed between the dying down of the active phase of the first non-co-operation movement of 1920 and the following years, and the appointment of the Statutory Commission, which called a truce to these sanguinary encounters, that is, a period of rather more than two years, there was hardly any development of importance in Indian politics other than the slow steady resurgence of Hindu-Moslem antagonism, and its establishment on new, wider and deeper foundations.

It is necessary to speak quite frankly about the Hindu-Moslem position in India, because it really does dominate Indian politics, and the very existence of India, as we know it at present, depends on some compromise being reached between the rival claims of the two communities. Before the Reforms of 1919, that is, before self-government for India had risen above the horizon and had become anything more than a distant and somewhat dim ideal, the Hindu-Moslem problem was a fairly simple one. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Moslem traditions of the great



days when they ruled India had apparently died out or survived only in the minds of a few religious leaders or poets who took no part in the political life of the country and exercised no influence on it. On the occasions of religious festivals there were, from time to time, clashes between the more volatile elements of the two communities, but these were easily suppressed as a rule, caused very little damage, and died down, leaving no lasting effects once the immediate cause of the trouble had passed. But the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms have changed all that, or, at any rate, have coincided with, and powerfully reinforced certain other factors which were changing the situation.

During the first few generations of British rule, the Moslems allowed themselves to be outstripped in the race for Western education by their Hindu competitors. They continued to prefer their old traditional religious instruction, and it was not until towards the end of the nineteenth century that they took in earnest to the education supplied by the British rulers which had already placed the Hindus in a very strong strategic position in regard to public service and administration, and generally in regard to commercial and industrial pursuits. The steady increase in the number of Moslems educated on Western lines was bound to produce friction ultimately between their community and the Hindus, because it meant competition for employment and opportunities, which were already none too plentiful. And, as a matter of fact, long before 1919, signs of such friction were in evidence. It was a common saying both among British and Indians that education was the one *certain solvent of Hindu-Moslem differences*, and that all that was necessary

was to wait until this beneficial process had been accomplished by mere lapse of time. It is quite clear now that the differences which exist between Hindus and Moslems are such as can only be accentuated and not diminished by the spread of education. From this one cause alone, the possibilities of friction between the two communities were considerable because the great market for educated labour in India is government service, and by the beginning of this century the Hindu supply alone was greater than the demand, and, of course, the influx of Moslems into the overcrowded market meant consequent shrinkage of opportunities for Hindus.

Another development which led to the emergence of Hindu-Moslem dissensions of a more fundamental kind than those just mentioned was the revival of Islam which gathered strength after the war between Turkey and Greece in 1897. At the end of the nineteenth century it looked as though Islam as a world force had already reached its farthest bounds and was steadily receding. But the first two decades of the twentieth century have seen a distinct change in the fortunes of the Moslem world. In India, the Turkish war with Italy in Tripoli, and her later Balkan wars, produced very powerful effects on the minds of the Indian Moslems. The Great War and its aftermath, particularly the renaissance of Turkey under Mustapha Kemal and King Amanullah's attempt to modernise Afghanistan and make it an important power, and also ~~the abolition of the British and Russian spheres of~~ influence in Persia and its revival under a more vigorous rule than that of the old dynasty of the Shahs, have all emphasised the revival of Islam. Moslem

India is on the fringe of the Islamic world, with Moslem territories to the west of it stretching right away to Constantinople and Northern Africa, and it is permeated by the currents of feeling and by the developments which have taken place. There is no need to indulge in vague talk about pan-Islamism, which is very largely a figment of the imagination of scare-mongers, but, at the same time, it is obvious that the important developments mentioned above cannot have failed to stimulate the imagination of Indian Moslems and led them to take stock of their own position and to consider their own duties in regard to the protection of their share of the Islamic tradition and culture. Thus, without the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, Hindu-Moslem relations must have entered upon a difficult phase, but the influence of the developments mentioned above was strongly reinforced by the Reforms. As we have seen, the Reforms of 1919 were not only virtually the first step towards self-government for India, but actually gave responsible Indian Ministers the handling of certain powers of government in the provinces. The introduction of these new principles into Indian government, as experience shows, has effectively roused the Moslems from their ancient torpor in political matters, and every year since 1919 has witnessed the spread of political consciousness among the Moslem masses, the sharper definition of Moslem political ideals and claims, and, unfortunately, a continual widening and transformation of the old differences between themselves and the Hindus. The causes of disagreement between Hindus and Moslems are now quite definitely political and not religious. Moslems are now seeking to occupy and consolidate a

position which will ensure the maintenance of their own culture and their separate identity, and one in which they will be able to keep the political influence and power to which they are entitled by their numbers and by the importance of their community to India, particularly in military matters.

The importance of the Calcutta riots can now be estimated. They were one incident—a violent and explosive incident—certainly—nevertheless, no more than one incident of the broad development of Hindu-Moslem relations which we have been tracing. Lord Irwin understood this, and, as events showed, he was not slow to perceive its bearing on his own work. One of the sections of the Government of India Act of 1919 laid down that a Statutory Enquiry into the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and into the desirability and kind of changes was to be held. As early as the beginning of 1926, it was known that the British Government had no objections to ante-dating the institution of this Enquiry, and would appoint a Commission to undertake it as soon as the circumstances of India warranted such a step. Widespread inter-communal disorder, towards which India seemed to be heading at the time of Lord Irwin's arrival, would have provided the worst possible conditions for the work of the Commission. From an India torn by fratricidal strife no Commission of Enquiry could possibly get a clear lead, and Hindu-Moslem antagonism would play a part which the threat of Afghan invasion from the North-West played in 1919, namely, that of compelling the British Government to take none but absolutely unavoidable risks. Certainly no issue in India was of greater urgency, and Lord Irwin rightly

chose it as the occasion for his first public intervention in Indian politics. In any fully self-governing country, this work would, of course, have fallen to the lot of some responsible minister, a member of the national Cabinet, but there is no such person in the Government of India. Only one man can speak with all the weight and authority of the Government behind his words in a matter like this, in which there is no executive order to be given or decision announced. That man is the Viceroy, and, following innumerable precedents in England, Lord Irwin chose a social occasion, about which hung none of the trappings of government or the formality of a state occasion, to give his first important message to India.

The Chelmsford Club in Delhi and Simla is one of a number of institutions which mark the happy change which has come over the social relations between Britons and Indians during the last two or three decades. It is a club whose membership is open both to Europeans and Indians, and among its members are many of the most distinguished Government servants, members of the Legislature, and men prominent in business and finance. It has developed the hospitable practice of giving dinners from time to time, to which distinguished men and women from all over India are invited to meet the Viceroy or some eminent official and to listen to speeches on the burning topic of the day. The Chelmsford Club asked Lord Irwin to be the guest of honour at a dinner in July, and he saw at once what an excellent opportunity this would provide for bringing before the whole country the fundamental importance of the Hindu-Moslem troubles. The club's guests made the long journey to

Simla from all parts of India, and when he rose to speak Lord Irwin had as representative and influential an audience to speak to as he could desire. The theme, too, was just the right one to bring out those characteristics of his which afterwards were to impress Indian imagination so deeply. It can be said quite truly that after the Chelmsford Club speech Lord Irwin ceased to be merely the new Viceroy, and found himself in possession of an influence and vested with a prestige which grew steadily during the remainder of his stay in India. Throughout, his speech held a personal note and was tinged with a certain emotion. He had no difficulty in showing that the British Government had everything to gain from harmony between the two great Indian communities and to point out how their antagonism went far deeper than irritation or grievances caused by mere administrative arrangements such as separate communal electorates. Far and away the most effective and impressive parts of his speech were those in which he called the leaders of both Hindus and Moslems to 'throw themselves with ardour into a new form of communal work and into a nobler struggle—the fight for toleration,' and his final appeal for peace in the name of religion itself.

'I appeal,' he concluded, 'in the name of religion because I can appeal to nothing nobler, and because religion is the language of the soul, and it is a change of soul that India needs to-day. . . . Whatever, indeed, be the creed that men profess, such creed is the attempt men make to know the forces that lie beyond human vision and learn the secret of how human nature may be refined, and, in so doing, realise the ultimate purposes of their existence. Achievement is hard . . .

but the reward is great, and there can surely be no greater tragedy than that religion, which thus should be the expression and the support of man's highest instincts, should be prostituted by an alliance with actions through which these instincts are distorted and disgraced '

None of those who were present are ever likely to forget the occasion. The impression produced by the speech was profound indeed, and the next issues of the newspapers, both European and Indian, showed complete unity in regard to it. The veteran Hindu politician and religious leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Brahmin of Brahmins, was present, although, of course, he did not take any food, and so was Sir Abdul Karim Ghuznavi, one of the foremost Moslem leaders in India, a determined and consistent champion of Moslem rights and claims. A greater contrast could hardly be imagined than that between the now aged and somewhat frail and ascetic Brahmin, and the vigorous and practical Moslem leader, but their reactions to Lord Irwin's speech were identical. An Indian Christian member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, some time earlier, had accused the Indian Government of having lost the moral leadership of the country. Whatever the truth of this may have been, there can be no doubt that it was with the Government of which Lord Irwin was the head after the Chelmsford Club speech. The long, slow, inexorable widening of the gap in politics and in public life between Hindus and Moslems continued, but there was quiet for a time in the streets and public places where lately rival mobs had clashed and fought. *Still more striking is the fact* that for about two months afterwards there was a

complete lull in the Hindu-Moslem rioting which previously had broken out in some part or other of India almost weekly. About a month later, the autumn session of the Indian Legislature opened in Simla, and, in his inaugural address to the two Houses, Lord Irwin again returned to this 'dominant issue in Indian life.' This time, in the more formal and official atmosphere in which he found himself, Lord Irwin emphasised the determination of his Government to maintain the public peace.

The General Elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures fell due at the end of 1926, and, throughout the year, the influence of Hindu-Moslem dissensions on the broad political position in India became more and more apparent. By this time, a very interesting and what once looked like a very promising position had been reached in the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. After boycotting the first elections to the reformed Legislatures in 1920, the Swarajists, or, as they are now called, the Congress Party, had stood for election in 1923 with the avowed object of capturing enough seats in the various bodies to be able, by obstruction from within, to make their functioning impossible. But, by the end of 1926, after three years of a fierce offensive on the new Constitution, the Congressmen were forced to admit that it was stronger than they. The Indian Legislature had quite definitely established itself as the only national All-India political body in existence. Congress itself, particularly after the repeated secessions which were mentioned earlier, had less claim than ever to be regarded as the one comprehensive, All-India, political organisation, and, in a word, the vast majority of



politically minded and patriotic Indians were determined that the new Legislatures should not be wrecked nor should the Reforms be brought to nothing by mere obstruction. Close observers of Indian politics in those days, including distinguished Indians, expected that after the 1926 elections the Congress Party in the Legislatures would be forced by circumstances to adopt the rôle of a constitutional opposition and to drop their purely wrecking tactics. And, in fact, this, broadly speaking, was what happened. But, by November, when the Elections were held, the state of feeling in the country was such that they were fought on frankly communal or personal issues. That is, Moslem candidates in Moslem constituencies appealed for the votes of their constituents on their merits as good champions of Moslem interests. In non-Moslem constituencies, and particularly in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and certain other parts, many Hindu candidates stood as representatives of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, whilst in Madras the issue was fought out between the non Brahmins and the Brahmins, from whom the Congress Party derives practically all its strength in that province. So bitter had personal animosities become between certain Hindu Nationalist leaders that some of them even made a point of opposing each other. For a time, it was even possible that the late Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya would stand for the same urban constituency in the United Provinces. This would certainly have been one of the most spectacular clashes in the whole history of elections fought under the present Constitution, but, at the last moment, these two important leaders each selected a different

constituency. Thus, national issues, in the true sense of the word, receded into the background, and the results of the election reflected the mixture of motives and causes, and, particularly, the inter-communal antagonism which had been at work.

The most striking feature of the elections was the spectacular success of Congressmen in the Madras Presidency, where they practically swept the field. Their old opponents, the non-Brahmin, or Justice Party, had held power in that Province almost unchecked since the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the results of the 1926 elections were a natural revulsion from the continued domination of one party. But, all over the rest of India, in the Central Legislature and in every provincial body, the Congressmen lost ground. In Northern India, the Congressmen almost disappeared from the Provincial Councils, and even in the Central Provinces where, in the past, they had secured their most spectacular successes and had been able to bring the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to a standstill, they lost heavily, and, in effect, incurred a vote of censure. Thus, apart from the very menacing Hindu-Moslem situation it really did look, at the end of 1926, as though the political barometer was set fair, and those who hoped that even the most extreme sections of political opinion in India would ultimately be content to work for constitutional progress by constitutional means were undoubtedly encouraged.

Nevertheless, the presence in the Indian Central Legislature of a solid *bloc* of Congress representatives who formed far and away the biggest single party there showed that the Government was not going to have

any easy task with its Opposition, and also that the demand for purely political and constitutional changes would continue to dominate the proceedings of the Central Legislature

It is the custom of the Viceroy to go each year in December to Calcutta and stay there for a few weeks. Between leaving Simla at the end of the summer and going to Calcutta, Lord Irwin took the opportunity of acquainting himself at first hand with the conditions of another of the formidable problems which are always with the Government of India. This is the problem of the North-West Frontier which is nine-tenths of the problem of the defence of India. The problem is one that grows continually in complexity and scope as the frontier tribes increase the number of modern weapons at their disposal, and as the powers on India's borders became more subject to the force of anti-British influences. It is clear that a united and properly organised India has little to fear from any of her immediate neighbours, but here again we are brought up against the question. What is India? Does India, for example, stop short at that invisible and indefinable boundary which runs sometimes at the foot, and sometimes inside the Suleiman Mountains, the long, barren tangle of hills which stretches for four hundred miles or so south from Peshawar to Baluchistan? This imaginary line is called the 'Administrative Border,' because it is the border of the regularly administered Indian districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, while west of it lies the welter of savagery which is technically known to us as 'tribal territory,' but in the vernaculars of the neighbouring parts of settled India is called 'Yaghistan,' the 'land of unrest.'

But there is another boundary line beside the administrative border—that which separates Afghanistan from 'Yaghistan' This is known as the Durand Line, after Sir Algernon Durand, the plenipotentiary of the Government of India in the negotiations with Afghanistan when the boundary between that country and India was demarcated throughout its greater part in 1894. By a treaty between the Amir of Afghanistan and the Indian Government, the tribes between the Durand Line and the Administrative Border were acknowledged as being within India's sphere of influence. The full implication of this arrangement was not perceived for many years, indeed, is not generally perceived even now. By explicitly warning off all other powers from these tribes, the Indian Government implicitly accepted responsibility for their welfare. There was not the faintest intention or desire on the part of the Indian Government to interfere with the tribes, nor was, or is there, the least likelihood of their attempting to undertake wars of conquest in these wild, inhospitable regions. For some years after 1894, the 'close border' policy was strictly maintained, and not until Lord Curzon's time did the Indian Government try to raise the state of these savage neighbours of ours by peaceful means. His policy, which is one of the landmarks in the history of the frontier problem, was a partial application of the Baluchistan system to the North West Frontier, that is, broadly, the system of supporting and subsidising the tribal leaders and enabling them to keep peace and order within their limits by the agency of their own tribesmen. Until the outbreak of the Great War it worked well, but it was not to be expected that the

hungry frontier people would remain unaffected by the world upheaval, and the years which follow 1914 are marked by frontier campaigns against several tribes. But the storm centre was Waziristan in the south, where Mahsud aggressions reached an intolerable pitch. A short and inconclusive campaign against them in 1917 had to be followed in 1920-21 by the most severe campaign in the whole of our frontier history. Certain events in Waziristan during and after the Afghan war of 1919 had revealed the absolute impossibility of leaving the frontier tribes to 'stew in their own juice' any longer. It was clearly realised that the rigid 'close-border' system was a process of sitting on the safety valve, and that there must be an entirely new departure in our frontier policy. There could be no question of subjugating the tribesmen by force of arms. That was not necessary or desirable. So after the conclusion of the Mahsud campaign of 1920-21, the Indian Government entered on a frontier policy worthy of a great and enlightened power, the policy of bringing civilisation back again to the hills from which it had been banished a thousand years ago. And the method by which this high task was to be accomplished was the method which Rome had used to bring civilisation to our own country, and by which within the last century Russia had civilised the Caucasus. For roads, and their modern equivalents, railroads, are the great carriers of civilisation, and if they lead into a country they also lead out. The fine highroads which have been constructed in Waziristan since 1920 and the Khyber Railway, opened at the end of 1925, are the first steps towards the accomplishment of the new frontier policy—a forward policy in the highest and

truest sense of the word Civilising influences can now penetrate, and are penetrating, the wild highlands whose name has hitherto been a synonym for terror and bloodshed and degradation In the British Islands Wade's roads did for the Scottish clans what the Indian Government is now doing for Mahsuds and Afridis The moral and economic effects of the new policy should within a measurable span of years replace bloody chaos by ordered peace, the rule of the rifle and the knife by the rule of law, and turn robbers and furtive murderers into citizens

Such is the policy and such the prospects, and it should not be necessary to point out their importance to the future of India For centuries the North-West Frontier has been her heel of Achilles, a region of dread and menace But from now onwards it should begin to see the light of day, be drawn by the invisible bonds of benefit and enlightenment into the orbit of India's life, and become her buckler instead of her naked side On the full achievement of the aim of the new frontier policy depends the achievement of India's territorial unity and her safety—the very pith and marrow of the problems which any future Reforms have got to solve

At the time of Lord Irwin's visit, the frontier had for a long while been enjoying peace such as it had not known since the outbreak of the Great War Raids from tribal territory in the settled districts on our side of the administrative border had practically ceased, and between the border and the Durand Line the tribes were reasonably peaceful among themselves But peace on the North-West Frontier is a volatile, unstable thing Fighting and looting are the frontier tribesman's

substitute for bridge, they are a pleasant relaxation from the dull business of earning a livelihood in more monotonous occupations. Except in Central Waziristan, the police, the frontier constabulary and militias, and various other irregulars like scouts and khassadars, lie out ahead of the regular troops, and they know how the pressure on their line from the tribesmen is like the pressure of the sea against a dyke, which finds a way inexorably through any weak part. Then, too, the elevation of Afghanistan after 1920 to the status of a fully independent kingdom, with a king at its head instead of an amir, and the modernising policy of ex-King Amanullah and of his successor, King Nadir Shah, have given a truly international aspect to Indian frontier policy and to the frontier problem. The events of the past few years in India have thrust the frontier problem somewhat into the background, so that the political problem has occupied all the centre of the stage. Nevertheless, in the last resort it is the problem of the frontier and of India's defence which is the master factor in Indian affairs. On the security of the North-West Frontier depend the life and welfare of India's millions.

Owing to his use of aeroplanes, Lord Irwin was able to inspect the whole length of the frontier, from the Malakand, north of Peshawar, to the farthest south of the North-West Frontier proper. He went up to the head of the Khyber and to Razmak in Waziristan, where he was able to see the new frontier policy being worked out on the spot. Everywhere he went he received deputations of the local inhabitants and replied to their loyal addresses. In this way, his tour of the frontier did something more than give him

first-hand knowledge of this important part of his work. It enabled representatives of all the frontier tribes and of all kinds and classes of the people to meet him personally. There is no shrewder judge of a man in the whole world than the Pathan, as the people of these hills are called—his own life so often depends on the correct appraisal of another's character—and it was an Indian writer who said, in discussing Lord Irwin's visit to the frontier, 'The frontier has met Lord Irwin and accepted him.'

It is important to know that external relations and relations with the Indian States are included in a portfolio administered by the Viceroy personally. He has two officials of high standing, the Foreign Secretary and the Political Secretary, to assist him in external and Indian States affairs, but the ultimate responsibility and authority rest with him. Thus, it was appropriate that almost immediately after the conclusion of his frontier tour Lord Irwin should begin his personal contact with the Indian Princes and their problems, and this he did by holding a Session of the Chamber of Princes at Delhi at the end of November. In his inaugural address, Lord Irwin struck a deeper note than is customary on such occasions, for, almost with his opening words, he announced that he intended to give the Princes some indication of the principles by which he considered that the relations between them and himself, as representing the Crown, should be guided. There is a foreshadowing, dim, but nevertheless definite, of the developments which, since 1926, have taken place in the relations between the Indian States and the rest of India, developments which have resulted in the organic union in an All-India



Federation of the States and the British Provinces, becoming the goal of Princes and British Indian politicians alike, and the declared policy of His Majesty's Government.

'It is becoming every day more clear,' Lord Irwin said, 'that the future relations of the States with the Government of India are a matter of the greatest moment, and I am anxious that this question should be examined with the greatest possible care from every point of view. . . . Frank discussion can do nothing but good, and I therefore propose . . . that the Chamber should authorise the Standing Committee to hold informal talks with me and my advisers whenever I think this might most advantageously be done.'

To some of the elder statesmen among the Princes these ideas which Lord Irwin was putting before them were not entirely new, and at least one of them, His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda, had thought and spoken about an All-India Federation as far back as 1917. But to most of his hearers, Lord Irwin's words must have opened up a new and important train of ideas.

Hindu-Moslem relations, the frontier problem, the Indian Princes and their future relations with British India—here are three of the guiding elements in the great Indian problem, and already Lord Irwin was seized of them by personal first-hand study of their conditions. And, shortly, he was to come into contact with another India, the India of big business and high finance, the India which is the only one known to thousands of business men all over the world. After his first Christmas in Calcutta, Lord Irwin knew what a baffling, unstandardised, incongruous, unmeasure-

able medley of irreconcilables the Indian problem is, and so within a few months of his landing in Bombay, he realised that there was no easy or merely formal solution for it. The seeds of his policy, which has changed the whole character of the problem out of which it arose, were planted by the experiences of his first year as Viceroy—less than six years ago as we count time, but a different age if we look at the basic conditions of the relations between Britain and India then and now.

On his way down to Calcutta, after addressing the Chamber of Princes, Lord Irwin stopped at Cawnpur to talk to the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and Ceylon, with whom he discussed general economic conditions and, in particular, one aspect of them, namely, certain proposed reforms in currency and banking which were afterwards to assume very great importance. This speech and others which he made to various financial and commercial bodies in Calcutta serve very well to illustrate the versatility of the work of a Viceroy of India to-day. As we shall see shortly, the circumstances of India were combining to force economic issues, more especially financial issues, to the front, and it was clear that these were very much in Lord Irwin's mind during his first visit to Calcutta.

In spite of the location of the official capital of India at New Delhi, Calcutta is still the real capital of India. It is the second biggest city in the British Empire, and concentrates within its limits a very large proportion of the non-official European population of India. There is a noticeable difference between Calcutta and Bombay, for whereas the latter is an Indian city, with

its chief industrial and financial interests firmly in Indian hands, the mainspring of Calcutta's economic activities are foreign. There are, it is true, some very important Indian interests there, but even these are in the hands of Marwaris from Central India and not in the hands of the people of Bengal, of which province Calcutta is the capital. Thus, in Calcutta, the Viceroy comes directly into touch with the full force of European non-official opinion, and he finds himself in one of the great cosmopolitan centres of the world. For years past, it has been the custom of the Viceroys of India to make in Calcutta pronouncements on matters of high policy of great weight and authority. The occasion for the most important of these pronouncements is always the annual dinner given to the Viceroy by the European Association of India, a non official organisation comprising all the leaders of non-official British activities in the country. At this dinner the Viceroy explains the policy of the Indian Government to his fellow countrymen in India, and, through them, to the wider audience at home. In his speech at the Association's dinner in December 1926, Lord Irwin plunged almost without preliminaries into a serious discussion of the political problems and future of India, thereby showing thus early, his eager interest in what was to become the major preoccupation of his viceroyalty. He knew that in his audience there must be some who doubted the wisdom of the course on which Great Britain entered by the Declaration of 1917, namely, assisting India to the attainment of responsible self government, and he was at pains to justify to these doubters the wisdom of that course, whilst acknowledging that the Association as a whole

had decided 'to throw their full weight on the side of supporting and justifying the new policy.' Even so early in his viceroyalty, Lord Irwin was able to develop some of the ideas which afterwards became the foundation of his considered policy. Thus, in answering the question when full responsibility might be granted to India, he laid stress on the basic truth that the achievement of full responsible government in India will not come as a grant from the British people to the Indian people, but will come naturally when certain conditions have been fulfilled by Indians themselves. In other words, he showed that responsible government for India can come in no other way than by co-operation between Britain and India. However generous the British Parliament may be in devolving powers on an Indian Parliament or on Indian statesmen they will only be building on sand unless the foundations of self-government have been laid by the Indian people themselves. Inside India Lord Irwin referred again to the absolute necessity for the best men of all creeds and all classes to work together for the common good of their country. Lord Irwin himself, towards the end of his first year in India, was under no illusions as to the difficulties and complexity of the task which lay ahead of him in India and he took care that these should be known.

Compared with some years that had gone before, and with some that were to follow, 1926 in India was largely devoid of events of the crude dramatic quality which fill the front pages of the more popular newspapers and lead to ignorant, unhealthy and temporary interest in violent or sensational, and entirely unrepresentative, doings in a distant and unfamiliar

country. But it was a year which history will cite as marking the change over from the old to a new conception of policy in regard to India's political future and the terms of her relationship with Great Britain and the rest of the British Commonwealth.

## CHAPTER VII

### INDIA STIRS

INDIAN politics were strangely apathetic during these months. The dying out of the first non-co-operation movement of 1920 and onwards, with its final outburst in the Sikh agitation in the Punjab, which, beginning as a religious movement for the reform of the administration of the Sikh places of worship, was captured by Left Wing extremists, seemed to have exhausted the energies of the extremist political leaders for the time being. Mr. Gandhi was still in retirement, where he had been since the end of 1924, and was not to emerge into the active political life of the country for another two years. But, from the beginning of 1927 onwards, the temperature of Indian politics steadily rises until the appointment of the Statutory Commission at the end of the year, which opened a phase in Indian politics which is still continuing.

A number of causes were responsible for the rise in the political thermometer before the appointment of the Statutory Commission, and, curiously enough, the most important of them was a highly technical financial measure, designed to stabilise the gold value of the rupee, which the Government of India first introduced into the Indian Legislature during the autumn session of 1926. The subject of the measure was of too extensive a character for any but experts properly to understand it, but the form of the opposi-

tion to the measure, and the kind of arguments used against it, generated enough heat in the country to thaw out her frozen politics and set them in brisk motion again. But another call to political action was given by the status of Indians overseas, particularly in certain other parts of the British Empire. Indeed, by 1927, it was already possible to detect, dimly at first, but, nevertheless, unmistakably, the effect on India of certain international, long-range influences which are at work throughout the world, producing one more of the long, slow, cyclical changes in human conditions and relationships of which history is the record. It is customary to interpret these changes in terms of economic forces and developments, because these are tangible things which can be measured and studied, and their effects remain visible to us in changes in our material conditions long after the impelling forces have spent themselves. But those springs of human action, which are not economic, though they are often more powerful, are always more subtle and volatile than this. Even while they are at work they frequently escape notice or defy isolation, and, once they have wrought their effects, they are irrecoverable by historic analysis as the invisible constituents of water are by any mechanical operation. Anybody who writes about the affairs of India to day is conscious to a quite extraordinary degree of the handicaps imposed upon him by this circumstance. A movement of opinion or feeling starts in some part or other of India and sweeps across the country as the wind sweeps over a cornfield. Where or how it starts it is usually impossible to say, and even its effects are not, as a rule, very obvious. When the wind has passed, the field looks much the same as

before. Only, here some stalks are bent, and there, some have been laid low. A constant succession of such blasts would, in time, level the whole field, but the fact remains that the force and weight of any particular gust cannot be estimated with any great accuracy.

So it is with the movements in Indian politics which we are studying now. The chronicler of the events of these days records that Mr. Gandhi, or Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, or Maulana Shaukat Ali, or any one of a score of other leaders, did this or that, and thereby set on foot some particular movement or other. But what impelled him to take such action, and why did it produce the observed results? At any given moment, the answers to these questions may be found in causes economic and material, local and communal, racial and instructive, national or international, or in a mixture of some or all of them. No man, however great, can initiate any national movement in a vacuum.

Let us be quite clear, then, that in India, as in other countries, there is no mere agitation for agitation's sake. Unrest, or political agitation, of a particular kind and scope, may or may not be justified, but it must have some basis, and our task is to study the bases of the various waves of unrest which have swept over India during the past few years, a task which must, however, be carried out subject to the limitations mentioned above.

By the beginning of 1927, then, the economic maladjustment of the post-War period had already produced subtle and deep-seated, but none the less real and powerful reactions in India. The more obvious causes of economic upset due to the War, and those easily susceptible to technical remedies, that is



to say, currency inflation and budgetary instability, the canalisation for war purposes of productive power, state control of distribution of resources and products and so on, had, it is true, disappeared, but the gap between the prices of primary products of all sorts, and those of manufactured goods had closed but slightly, and, shortly, was to be made wider again. India is all but entirely an agricultural country and the dislocation of the pre-War balance between agriculture and industry naturally struck her with peculiar force. Her many millions of peasant proprietors and others directly dependent on agriculture knew nothing of the way in which world conditions were affecting them in their little villages and remote hamlets where they carried out their agricultural operations with the methods and implements of a thousand years ago. Therefore, as conditions changed to their detriment and they felt the pinch more and more, what more natural than that they should turn to their Government for relief? Of course the Government of India was as helpless as any other national Government to alter circumstances created by world conditions, but from this very fact its enemies had a very powerful weapon to use against it. Many Europeans, and most Americans, together with one or two Asiatic countries, were on a tide of prosperity which was still swelling in 1927. Glowing accounts of their condition reached India and were repeated, with all kinds of variation and exaggeration in the bazaars and villages. But the masses of India, in spite of a succession of good harvests, were poor, as people must be poor who live in an overpopulated, unindustrialised country, with antiquated agricultural methods due in part to outworn social

customs and laws of succession. There was good soil here for the seed of misrepresentation, and the Rupee Stabilisation Bill was an excellent occasion for its sowing, a process carried on with all the more vigour because very many people in India quite genuinely believed that the Bill was a deliberate attempt to exploit India for the advantage of Great Britain.

These considerations alone invest the Bill with enough importance to warrant more than a passing mention, but, in addition, the agitation to which it gave rise, illustrates one or two features of the present system of government in India which take us down to some of the roots of Indian political unrest. The first of these is the aloofness of the Government of India from both popular opinion and popular support. Not a single member of the Government depends for his place on the support of any section of Indian opinion, and, apart from newspapers and public speeches, particularly speeches in the Indian Legislature, not one of them comes into touch with the currents of feeling and movements of opinion in India, unless it is by means of interviews with such Indians as seek them, or reports of Government officials. The Finance and Commerce members of the Viceroy's Council from time to time address Chambers of Commerce, or similar bodies, but not often, and, of course, the audiences are restricted and small, and these occasions are no substitute for the constant touch which politicians elsewhere maintain with the public, through speeches, election meetings and, above all, active membership of militant political parties. Even the provincial ministers, responsible to their legislatures and active party men, rarely stump the country, and

the result is that the vastly greater part of public political propaganda is performed, not only by the opposition to the Government of India, but by the most extreme part of the Opposition, for the same lethargy as is manifested by the members of Governments, both central and provincial, has fallen almost as completely on moderate Indian politicians whose voices are but seldom heard in public discussion of politics. Congressmen and Nationalists generally have come to regard this state of affairs as natural, and, of course, desirable, and, thus, when Sir Basil Blackett, who was then Finance Member to the Government, went boldly out into the country, explaining his Bill and the Government's policy, his action was met by fierce denunciation. His offence was all the worse because he proved to be a first-class fighting debater, and chose by preference the storm centres of Opposition for his public speeches. The effectiveness of this novel departure from precedent will be seen in the sequel, but in the eyes of many Government officials, not, however, including his colleagues on the front Government bench, who supported him stoutly throughout his campaign, his action was distinctly *infra dig*. One worthy went so far as to observe that members of the Government of India *ought to keep out of politics*, whilst another Government official who was helping Sir Basil in his campaign was told in a friendly, but, nevertheless, serious manner that such conduct derogated from the Government of India's standards of impartiality in, and aloofness from, politics and political controversy. Here we find crystallised one of the root weaknesses of the present system of government in India. The very men who criticised Sir Basil and his

lieutenants are men of high intellectual attainments, character, and sense of duty—for only such as these can get through the fine sieve of promotion in India, no matter what may be said to the contrary—and they are as deeply involved in practical politics as the members of any Government anywhere on earth, and yet they deliberately refrain from the sort of action which members of government elsewhere know to be necessary to their very existence

This aloofness from the raw life of politics should also be looked at from another angle. Elsewhere than in India, some of the main preoccupations of governments are with international affairs, with the international contacts of their countries, and with foreign opinion on their policies and the international repercussions of these. There is little, if any, of this in India. There, the Government is a branch of the Civil Service, and India's international contacts are ultimately the affair of the British Government and the British Foreign Office. The Indian Foreign Secretary is the deputy of the Viceroy, whose responsibility in vital foreign affairs is to the Secretary of State for India. Even relations with Afghanistan are the business of the British Foreign Office, and Lord Morley long ago showed in a trenchant passage the inability of the Indian Government to deal with its foreign policy even when it was concerned with the countries of the Persian Gulf on the outer fringe of its own confines. The members of that Government are thus kept within their own ring fence. To vary the metaphor, Indian affairs are seen by them as in the limited field and high light of a specimen under the microscope. There is just India, and beyond it—oblivion. Conscious of their own good intentions and

honest labours in India's welfare, they are unalive to the fact that India is part of the world organism, thrilling with the new life and the new ideas and the new impulses of every conceivable kind which are sweeping through her, because she is part of that bigger organism. This is only another aspect of the aloofness from public opinion and support which we are examining, but it explains much of what is happening in India to day. And by this devious route we come back to the position of the Viceroy, for, as long as this system lasts, he is the only effective link between his Government and the public life of India and between that and the outer world of which India is so important a part. It was inevitable that in any political activities of the Government of India—as apart from the actual administration of the central subjects of government—the Viceroy should take the lead and bear the chief part. From now onwards, until the entire system is changed, the Viceroy of India must be chosen for his qualities as a statesman and a practical politician, for these qualities are almost daily called more and more into action.

But we must return to our Currency Bill. Like so many other currencies the rupee was torn away from gold during the violent upheaval of the War, and after extreme fluctuations in opposite directions its value had /settled down by 1925 to about 1s 6d gold. One of the obvious measures which the Government of India had to take in order to restore the economic conditions of the country after the War was to stabilise the value of its standard coin, and in 1925 a very strong Royal Commission, including Indian gentlemen of high eminence in finance, business, and in the theoretical

study of economics, was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Hilton Young to enquire into the whole field of Indian currency and finance. After exhaustive enquiries in India and England, including evidence by the then Governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States, the Commission, with one dissentient, decided that the rupee should be stabilised at its *de facto* value of 1s 6d gold. It further recommended the creation of a Reserve Bank for India to carry out the duties performed by similar institutions in other countries. In short, this recommendation for the creation of a Reserve Bank of India was nothing less than a proposal to give India autonomy in matters of currency and credit policy as complete as that which she has enjoyed since 1920 in her fiscal policy. The one dissentient to the proposal to stabilise the rupee at 1s 6d gold was Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, one of the most eminent authorities in the country on finance and banking. He is also a prominent politician and one of the most influential men in the business life of Bombay City, and, therefore, in all India. In a minute of dissent attached to the Report of the Commission he advocated the stabilisation of the rupee at its pre-war parity of 1s 4d gold, and backed his technical and financial arguments by illustrations of the undesirable effects which he alleged would accrue to the economic life of India, particularly to its principal industry, agriculture, through stabilising at 1s 6d. Unfortunately, the Nationalist Press, with one or two honourable exceptions, and public speakers, did not attempt to discuss this highly technical question on its merits, and preferred instead to draw lurid pictures of the calamitous effects which, they alleged, would fall

on the agricultural population, the vast majority, that is, of the country 'Death warrant for millions of Indian agriculturists,' ran one by no means untypical headline, the death warrant being, of course, the Bill. Higher and higher rose the excitement as the opening of the January session of 1927 drew nearer, the session in which the fate of the Bill was to be settled. Yet, strangely enough, a very large section of the Congress Party, the Left Wing of the Left of the Opposition, was wavering. At this important crisis, the voice of urban labour was suddenly heard. The labour leaders, most of them Congressmen, saw clearly the effect on real wages of a reversion to 1s 4d, and they knew that the time lag before these could be raised again would be long, very long indeed in the still unorganised state of labour. Some of them were members of the Congress Party in the Legislature, and they pressed their views on their colleagues. Pandit Motilal Nehru himself was wavering. Sir Basil's campaign might result in a smashing victory after all. The Nationalist papers redoubled their shrill denunciations and it appeared that the entire agricultural population of India was in danger of annihilation. Sturdy defenders sprang up for them from among the ranks of Bombay financiers—so true it is that we never know our real friends except when we are in trouble!—and the battle in the Assembly swayed this way and that. The Moslems came over to the Government side almost *en masse*, and the insistence of Bombay at last overcame the Congress Party leaders. They realised with real political flair that no matter what the technical merits or demerits of the Bill might be, it gave them an unrivalled opportunity for carrying agitation at last to the countryside and rousing the

rural population from the 'pathetic contentment' in which the Montagu-Chelmsford Report found them. So Congress plumped against the Bill, and the labour leaders were invited to overcome their scruples or else to exercise them outside the party. The fate of the measure hung in the balance until the last moment. The situation was a serious one. The process of certification by the Viceroy was described in an earlier chapter, and it will be remembered that, in effect, this is the carrying of a piece of legislation over the heads of an adverse majority in the Legislature. There is very little reason to doubt that, had the Government failed to get a majority for its currency legislation, it must have been certified. Otherwise, the consequences would have been quite literally catastrophic, for the return of the rupee to 1s. 4d. gold from the prevailing ratio of 1s. 6d. would have been accomplished as the result of a wild and speculative scramble by all who could get hold of rupees to turn them into sterling at the higher ratio and bring them back at the lower. But if Lord Irwin had certified, it is as certain as these things can be, that the whole Opposition would have left the Assembly and not have returned to it. The whole experiment of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms would thus have been brought to a standstill. From such a consequence the Government was saved by the endeavours of Sir Basil Blackett and his chief colleagues on the Government Front Bench, namely: Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member; Sir Charles Innes, Member for Railways and Commerce; and Sir Bhupendranath Mitra, the Member for Industry and Labour. The crucial vote was taken on an amendment moved by a Congress member to the clause which



fixed the gold content of the rupee. The intent of the amendment was to fix the rupee at 1s 4d gold. The division was won by the Government by three votes after the biggest division in the history of the Legislative Assembly.

This division cleared the way for the remaining stages of the Government's currency legislation, but there can be no doubt that the whole rupee controversy and its accompanying propaganda engendered feelings in the Opposition which were to affect the subsequent course of Indian politics and to give a fillip to anti-Government agitation which had been flagging for over a year. Yet, on the whole, the short period aspect of Indian economics was not unfavourable. Indian finances were long ago described by a Finance Member as a gamble in rain, a saying marking truly the overwhelming importance of the monsoon to Indian economic life and welfare generally. For four years the monsoons had been good, the exportable surplus of India's agricultural produce had been large, and her balance of trade favourable. The post-War gap between the prices of manufactured goods and raw produce was still wide, but it was closing, and it appeared likely that the declared policy of the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve Bank would result in reasonably stable prices and in a check to the fluctuations detrimental to the primary producer. After a series of unbalanced budgets in the early post-War years, the national accounts, under Sir Basil Blackett's regime, had been balanced, the credit of India was standing high in the world money market, the prices of Indian Government securities were up and the Government actually borrowing money on

more favourable terms than the British Government. Moreover, Sir Basil Blackett had already begun the process of abolishing the provincial contributions, a process which he was to complete within the next year. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the Government of India had to surrender certain sources of revenue to the provinces, and in return it exacted a yearly contribution, which differed between province and province, from every province in India to enable it to pay its own way. These contributions were the cause of much heartburning, and as they amounted to an appreciable percentage of the incomings of each province, their payment clearly hindered the pace of provincial development, particularly in the so-called 'nation building' departments, such as education, public health and local self-government. The desirability from every point of view of abolishing these contributions is therefore clearly apparent. It meant that all over India more money would be available for building schools, rural dispensaries, roads and bridges, and for the fostering of rural industries which is one of the tasks of a Provincial Government in India.

A longer view of the economic position of India, however, revealed features not so favourable. In the first place, it was clear that population was increasing rapidly, and we know now that the census of 1931 was to register an increase of over thirty millions in the ten years between 1921 and 1931. Since the first census of India was taken in 1871, the true increase of population, omitting double counting and the addition of new areas, such as Upper Burma and various frontier tracts, has been over eighty millions. It speaks well for the economic development of the country that it should be

able to carry such a colossal increase as this. The maintenance of this enormous additional population is made possible partly by the addition of scores of millions of acres to the cultivated areas through irrigation from canals, wells of all sorts, and tanks, through the development of railways and roads, through the peace and security guaranteed by British rule, and by the great development of India's internal and external trade and the partial industrialisation of the country. But already the limits of further additions through irrigation and the reclamation of forest or waste lands are in sight. In many parts of India the system of fragmentation of holdings is steadily reducing the efficiency of agriculture, and for some time to come foreign capital for developmental purposes will be obtained by India in a world market which is competing more fiercely for a smaller amount than before. In one of the last and greatest speeches which he made in India, Lord Reading drew attention to some of the immense economic problems which lie before India, and he outlined for his hearers—the occasion was a speech to the Indian Legislature—the fundamentals, as he saw them, of the industrialisation of India and the balance to be observed between industry and agriculture. This is a problem which will become more and more acute with every year. Already, the question of finding employment for the products of the Indian schools and universities has reached a dangerous point, and is one of the most powerful and intractable elements in Indian political agitation. Agriculture, as the occupation of almost three-fourths of the people of India, clearly must have pride of place in any attempt to improve the economic conditions of India, and, at

this time, the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture, whose appointment was one of the last acts of Lord Reading's viceroyalty, was conducting its enquiries and was soon to produce its very voluminous and valuable Report.

Lord Irwin's position as a great English landowner, and his past connection as Minister of Agriculture in the British Government with the practical side of the development and improvement of agriculture, made the Linlithgow Commission an object of especial interest to him. In his public speeches and in his replies to deputations of various sorts, he gives numerous proofs of his interest, and he made it a practice to go incognito into outlying villages and watch the peasants at work and study the conditions of their lives for himself. But the difficulties in the way of any radical improvement in the efficiency of Indian agriculture are very numerous and very deep-seated. There are legal and financial difficulties and even social and religious difficulties. The custom of partitioning an estate among a number of people will not easily disappear, for it is bound up with all sorts of historic and religious traditions and customs. Also, it will be a long time before the purdah system is modified sufficiently to allow women to take part in agricultural operations as they do in other countries. At the best, therefore, appreciable improvement in the economic position of India from the side of agriculture can come only slowly.

These long-term economic factors and influences are obscure, but their effect on Indian politics is clear enough. With population growing at a prodigious rate and with negligible openings for emigration, the

pressure on the land and on the available employment becomes yearly more intense, and such conditions as these are the most fruitful breeding ground imaginable of revolution. Very little profit would be obtained by trying to estimate the relative importance of the economic and political factors in the present Indian discontents, but it is not open to doubt that the economic factor is a very weighty one and calls for a long term policy of planned economic development if India is to escape the dire consequences which will inevitably ensue in the absence of such a policy boldly and intelligently conceived and consistently carried through. It is as well that this should be realised, for it makes no difference to the working of economic forces whether India is governed by a British or by an Indian Government. These consequences will follow with greater speed if a stable and experienced Government is suddenly replaced by a more or less experimental and inexperienced Government. This consideration is present to the minds of most of the leaders of the Indian people in normal times when the world's economic machinery is functioning smoothly and international trade is flowing briskly, but it is bound to be obscured in times of depression and stress, and then it is easy for economic evils to be represented as being due to the shortcomings of the Government. And in India, whose Government is still responsible to the people of a foreign country, these representations are easily believed and given added strength because they appeal to some of the most primitive instincts in human nature. We know now that in 1927 India would before long be sailing out of the smooth stretch of economic sea which she had been traversing for the

past few years, and, in common with the rest of the world, encounter a storm of unparalleled fury.

The same medley of economics, politics, and racial susceptibility are involved in the other cause which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter as contributing to the break-up of the calm in Indian politics from 1927 onwards. This is the problem of the conditions of life and the status of Indians overseas, particularly inside the British Empire, which is practically the only outlet for Indian emigration overseas. The particular phase of the problem which confronted Lord Irwin and his Government in 1927 was that of the relations between India and the Union of South Africa, but, of course, the problem is immensely wider than this, and is liable at any time to provide a troublesome or even dangerous situation in a number of different parts of the world. The number of Indian nationals involved is great, for there are between one and a half and two millions of them scattered about in different parts of the globe. Most of the trouble which arises out of the presence of Indians in other countries than their own is due to the fact that the first and greatest wave of Indian emigration was formed of unskilled and illiterate labourers, coolies, as they are known all over the world. These people, like their peers in other countries, did not, of course, represent the highest form of Indian culture, nor are their standards, economic or other, anything like those of the most advanced which their country can show. It is only comparatively recently that Indian skilled artisans, clerks and the more substantial class of shopkeeper have settled abroad, and it is unfortunately true that in many of the countries where

they live these higher classes of Indians tend to be regarded as in no way different from their humbler countrymen who preceded them. It should never be forgotten that the tropical and semi-tropical parts of the British Empire owe an immense debt to their Indian immigrants, for without these their economic development would be nowhere near the point which it has reached to-day. As far as the present colonial Empire is concerned, if certain parts of East Africa are excepted, it may be said that India now has no quarrel with the conditions under which her nationals live. In East Africa the situation is complicated by the presence of white settlers, but, after a somewhat fierce tug-of-war between these and the Indian and Home Governments a few years ago, the position was made reasonably satisfactory by the announcement made by Mr Thomas in the House of Commons on 7th August 1924. Mr Thomas announced that, as regards the franchise which allows only a small representation of the Indian population in the Legislative Council and also as regards the prohibition of Indian settlement in the highlands of Kenya no change would be made. But Indian immigration into Kenya would be restricted only if this were seen to be necessary in the interests of the native Africans, and, further, that an area in the lowlands of the colony would be set aside for agricultural immigrants from India. In the Dominions also, with the single exception of the Union of South Africa, the position is now, on the whole, satisfactory. Canada, Australia and New Zealand have very few Indian settlers, and, further, influx is strictly regulated, but such Indians as are in these countries are not subject to any hurtful restrictions or dis-

criminations South Africa's position has for some time been different from that of her sister Dominions

For various reasons, the problem of the rights and status of Indian settlers has proved more intractable there than anywhere else in the British Empire South Africa has vastly more Indian settlers than any of the other British Dominions, and she is also the only one of the Dominions faced with an important racial problem owing to the presence of large numbers of indigenous natives The growth of town life and town occupations and the comparative paucity of land available for farming have combined to bring into existence a class of poor whites who represent a danger to the standard of living of their more fortunate compatriots The frugal, thrifty Indian, with his Eastern standard of living, is well calculated to thrive in South African conditions, and in so thriving, he has, on the whole, made fewer concessions to Western standards than his critics approve Hence the various disabilities imposed on him from time to time by successive South African Governments The situation in 1927 was briefly the following At the end of 1924 it was learned that the Governor-General of South Africa had given his consent to a Bill which would fully safeguard the rights of Indians already on the electoral roll of voters, but would impose serious obstacles to additions to these rolls Feeling in India was deeply stirred by this news, and a deputation representing the Government of India was sent to South Africa with the result that the South African Government agreed to discuss with the Indian Government the best way of settling the whole question of Indian settlers in the Union Subsequently, a friendly conference was held



in Cape Town and a deputation from South Africa visited India in September. These exchanges of courtesy resulted in a settlement which, at any rate, stabilised the situation for a time and relieved the more pressing anxieties of Indians both in India and in South Africa. But, it would be idle to deny, passions had been roused in India which were slow to die down, and a wave of propaganda swept from the Indian press to the people, the burden of it being that in order to safeguard the rights of their brethren overseas and to ensure to them the status of civilised beings, Indians themselves must be free. The argument was a strong one, and met with a ready response.

Meanwhile, the fire of Hindu-Moslem antagonism burned still more strongly during these months. Two scurrilous publications directed against the Prophet Muhammad had caused a sudden burst of anger throughout Moslem India, and, ominously, it spread across the Border into the Khyber Pass, where many Hindus have been living for generations on friendly terms with their Afridi hosts. For a time, there was imminent danger of bloodshed, but the Government of India's quick, stern warning averted this calamity. Nevertheless, the Afridis were not to be deterred from visiting some condign punishment on their innocent Hindu traders, and they began to expel them from their villages and send them down into British India, which many of them had never seen. During the summer, between twenty and thirty riots occurred, in which over a hundred persons were killed and over a thousand injured. In Lahore, rapid mobilisation of troops and police crushed in its beginnings an affray which threatened to be one of the worst of modern

years. It is an ungrateful task to dwell on this side of India's life, but, indeed, it arises out of a problem which is at the very root of the wider problem of India's political future, and to attempt to shut our eyes to it is no wiser than the action of a man suffering from a cancer who should try to pretend that it is not there. Once more, in August, Lord Irwin found himself bound to draw the attention of the country to the scope and character of inter-communal strife. Speaking to the Indian Legislature, he said: 'I am not exaggerating when I say that during the seventeen months that I have been in India, the whole landscape has been overshadowed by the lowering clouds of communal tension. . . . In less than eighteen months . . . the toll taken by this bloody strife has been between 250 and 300 killed, and over 2500 injured.' Here in a few striking phrases and figures we have the fell character of this master element in the Indian problem exposed. And worse was to come. A few years later, one single outburst was to show figures double those quoted by Lord Irwin as the toll taken by eighteen months of strife, and by this later date the ancient enmity had extended to apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion regarding fundamental constitutional issues. In 1927 these deeper differences still lay mostly in the future, but it was a fateful year for Hindus and Moslems, as the sequel will show. In drawing the attention of the Legislature, and all India, to this subject, Lord Irwin had another purpose in view, besides the reconciliation of the two communities. He wanted a peaceful atmosphere for the Statutory Commission, and he took the important—and risky—step of offering to convene a conference of responsible

leaders of both communities, if these requested him to do so, with the intention of themselves seeking a firm and lasting settlement. The response was disappointing. Pride would not let the leaders ask the Viceroy for help until they had made at least one more effort to solve their problem by themselves. Efforts were made, sincere and determined efforts, both in Delhi and in Calcutta, by members of the Central Legislature and by the Congress Working Committee, to reach an end of the old ruinous strife. Later still, as we shall see, the most resounding and determined effort of all was made to find a solution, but they all failed, and, by that time, the agitation against the Statutory Commission had caused such further cleavages as to make acceptance of Lord Irwin's offer impossible. Who can tell what might have happened had the offer been promptly and warmly accepted in the spirit in which it was made? But it was not accepted, and India has paid dearly for the refusal.

Thus, economic factors, the position of Indians overseas, and Hindu-Moslem relations were working busily throughout 1927 to break the flatness of Indian politics, and, in the midst of this stir of new activity, as spring gave way to summer, a new interest of a very vital and absorbing kind reared its head. This was the possibility, which fast developed into a certainty, that the Statutory Commission, so long and so often demanded by Indian politicians, would be constituted at an early date. But, side by side with this rumour appeared a connected rumour of an ugly and sinister kind. Whispered among the politicians, and then hinted at in newspapers, it first assumed concrete form in the mouth of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who was in

England on a visit in the summer of 1927, and came back with the unwelcome tidings that the proposed Commission would be an exclusively British one, and that India would find no representation on it. At once all the Indian newspapers and all organised sections of Indian political opinion rallied to the attack. Gone with a vengeance was the prolonged indifference now, and in Indian political circles all was eager activity, strenuous canvassing of India's claims to representation on the body which was to play such a large part in shaping her political future, and indignant assertion that India could produce men of calibre and impartiality to match any which could be found in England. But in Simla Lord Irwin gave long and anxious consideration to this issue which had so suddenly emerged. The views of most of those who were qualified to speak for India were available to him, either by way of personal interview or from outspoken and frequent interviews in the press. The case for an All-British Commission certainly finds strong support on grounds of logic. In law the British Parliament is still the arbiter of India's political destiny, and after years of such an important experiment as that of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms it needed and demanded a clear lead on the action to be taken by it on the expiry of the ten-year term laid down in the 1919 Act. Opinion in England on the subject of India was acutely divided and was not becoming any mellowed as the time for changes in her Government approached. What could be more reasonable, therefore, than that Parliament should delegate a number of its trusted members, representative of all the three parties, to go to India on its behalf, see things and make full enquiry

on the spot, and then report to it for its guidance? There was every hope that such a delegation, adopting such a procedure, would find itself in agreement on all the main points in issue, and that such agreement would almost automatically commend itself to Parliament, thus obviating bitter disputes and divisions in England over the government of her great dependency, and, also, benefit India by enabling Parliament to proceed steadily with a plan of Reforms for India adequate to her circumstances and satisfying to her ambitions.

There can be little doubt that the distinguished officials in India who advised Lord Irwin in favour of a purely Parliamentary Commission were powerfully influenced by the state of affairs in the country at that time. In particular, the condition of Hindu-Moslem relations alone must have seemed to them of decisive weight. The appointment to the Commission of moderate men would certainly have been fiercely assailed by extreme partisans of both communities, whilst the appointment of men who had been prominent in inter-communal controversy could hardly have had any other result than stalemate between their views. Moreover, in this case, the communal question would have been carried into the Commission's own deliberations, with obviously undesirable results. From the side of India herself, a strong logical case could be made out for the 'all-white' Commission. But logic is only the formal part of wisdom, and it is idle to deny that a case just as conclusive could be made out for the wisdom of including Indians in the Commission, if *only to satisfy the amour-propre* and the declared feeling on the subject of many of India's statesmen.

However, the bulk of opinion, both in India and in England, of those in whose hands the decision lay was in favour of an All British Parliamentary Commission, and on 8th November 1927 the composition of the Commission was announced, and Lord Irwin and his Government were left to ride the storm which broke immediately. In their annual meetings at the end of December, Congress and the Liberal Federation found themselves strangely in agreement on at least one point of political tactics, for they both resolved to boycott the Commission. The Moslem League split into two halves over the question. One half, led by Mr Jinnah, resolved on boycott, the other, under Sir Muhammad Shafi, decided for co operation. But in Sir Muhammad Shafi's wing were practically all the Punjab and Bengal Moslems, the great majority of the community.

Taking advantage of the prevailing excitement, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru got Congress to accept a resolution declaring complete independence to be India's goal. But this was never taken seriously by the older men, and was never regarded as committing the Congress. Far more important was that part of the Congress resolution which recommended joint electorates for Hindus and Moslems in the various legislative bodies, with reservation of seats on the basis of population, a recommendation which was to prove of fateful significance as will be seen when the fate of the Nehru Report is discussed.

Thus, by the end of 1927, the political apathy which had prevailed at its beginning was gone—and for ever.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DRIFTING INTO DISUNITY

THUS the year 1927 may be truly described as a turning-point in the history of India, for in that year began the new alignments and groupings of forces and opinions, the new and clearer definition of ideals by the different communities or political parties in India, and the activities, lawful and unlawful, peaceful and violent, wise and foolish, to realise these ideals—contradictory and mutually destructive as some of them are—which have produced the Indian situation of to-day. It is a rapidly moving situation, and will not become static until the relations between Britain and India have become adjusted on the basis of a comprehensive, long-term policy of automatic evolution to self-government, as complete as that enjoyed by any of the other British Dominions, and, also—what is no less important than the foregoing because it is the foundation on which a self-governing India must be built—until the clash between the rival communities and interests in India has disappeared in agreement between the people of India themselves. In an earlier discussion of the importance of the Simon Commission to Indian political development, I said that the Commission acted as a spectroscope, splitting Indian politics into its component parts, distinguishing one element from another and enabling the outside observer of Indian politics to see the composition of

the subject which he was studying. In its character of spectroscope, the Commission was to show how interests, communities, and sections of political opinion ranged themselves, and, also, how the Indian provinces come into the many-coloured line, because their politics and views are factors of great and growing importance in the general politics of India.

India's reaction to the All-British Commission was a violent one. Throughout the length and breadth of the country, newspapers, public speakers, and politicians of almost all political parties rivalled each other in the violence of their denunciations of the insult which they alleged had been offered to India. The violence of the reaction will not surprise the reader who has followed the description of the working of the great natural forces given in the earlier chapters of this book. Through decades and generations these forces had been introduced into Indian politics and Indian public life, set to work, and allowed to grow. During seven years of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the people of India, primarily in the provinces, but also in the Central Legislature, had either handled the mighty engines of democratic government or had been in a position to advise and even influence the men who had been working them for the Government of India, and, ultimately, for the British Parliament. In these seven years the political education of India had leapt forward, travelling farther than it had done in the preceding seventy years of slow and deliberate development, decided for, and given to India by her British rulers. During these seven years Indian political leaders were out of the class-room, and in the laboratory, observing, handling, testing for themselves. All



the while their appetite grew by what it fed on, the scope of their political ambitions widened day by day, and above all, they now knew that the Reforms of 1919 had given them many strong powers which they could exercise in their own right. These powers they had exercised repeatedly, and they saw that while the official Government of India and the official side of the Provincial Government held final control, as far as the law of the Constitution was concerned, in practice that control was subject to limitation and modification by them. So in a moment almost, the moment of the announcement of the Commission, the knowledge gained during these seven years of rapid, forced political development—hothouse development, if you will—strengthened the hands of those who for years had been claiming that there were two factors in the Indian political equation—the *British Parliament* and the people of India—and stiffened their determination to continue in active, dogged, non-co-operation with the Commission, until their right to have a voice in their own political future should be conceded. We shall see shortly how every Provincial Legislative Council but one decided to co-operate with the Commission, and how the majority of Moslems also decided to co-operate. But this was not at once. Some of the Provincial Councils consented only after first refusing, and in them, and also among the co-operating Moslems and other Indian communities or parties like the great Justice Party in the south, there were long and bitter searchings of heart, and the decision between co-operation and non-co-operation hung for weeks in the balance.

The reader must understand the incredible burden of

work and responsibility thrust upon the Viceroy himself by this development. A singular result of the responsibility of the Indian Government to the people and Parliament of Great Britain instead of to the people of India is that in the whole of India the only really responsible person is the Viceroy himself. The members of his Executive Council who, with himself, form the Government of India, are no doubt in law responsible to Parliament for their conduct, but theirs is a purely formal responsibility. It exists in a form of words and not in anything else. No decision of first-class importance can be taken by any of them without its being sanctioned at a meeting of the Viceroy's Council, and it is the Viceroy's opinion which counts most and counts finally. He can act in opposition to the opinion of his Council, and time after time he is forced so to act. Thus, any action of major importance upon which the Government of India may decide is, in effect, the action of the Viceroy, although in legal style it is the action of the Governor-General in Council. No better illustration of this can be given than the whole course of the controversy in the press of this country and in Parliament which raged around the later stages of Lord Irwin's work and policy in India. There was little, if any, talk of the Government of India, it was all the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and when the time came to negotiate with Mr. Gandhi as the spokesman of the whole Left Wing of Indian politics, it was Lord Irwin personally who initiated and carried through the negotiation, and it was on him personally and his doings that friends and enemies in this country and in India and all over the world concentrated their attention. Whenever Mr. Gandhi's name is mentioned

now, the ordinary process of association of ideas calls up also the name of Lord Irwin, who was the spokesman of the British and Indian Governments as clearly, and it may be added, quite as unfettered, as Mr Gandhi was of the Indian National Congress. For if Lord Irwin had a Secretary of State and the Parliament in England with final control over his actions, Mr Gandhi had the Working Committee of Congress standing in the same relation. But at times of crisis, and in these last three years of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty there were many crises, distant control, whether by Secretaries of State or by Working Committees, relax and become mere formalities, signifying nothing. The tide of events and their own strong characters are what determine the actions of the principals on the spot, seized of a great task of which the conditions and the circumstances change hour by hour. Were the Secretary of State never so strong, or well-informed, or perspicacious, he could not command the Viceroy's conduct in such things as we are about to study now, any more than the Secretary of State for War can control the decisions of his Commander-in-Chief in the field when the battle is fairly joined and the ranks of the fighting men sway to and fro, and the issue, with all its dread import, hangs in the balance. Let it be quite clearly understood that with the appointment of the Statutory Commission the first shot in the battle had been fired, henceforth Lord Irwin was in command with such forces as he found provided for him or as he could rally to his side. Fortunately, he had a Secretary of State in England, and a Government which trusted him and helped him. But even if the most unbending reactionary and the most unsympathetic Government

possible had been in power the result would have been just the same. Lord Irwin's work might have been made harder by the anxiety which arises from opposition and misunderstanding in high quarters, but nothing could have stopped him, for his conduct was determined and conditioned by the whole environment and circumstances in which he and his colleagues and their opponents found themselves. During the past decade, a great, silent revolution has taken place in the character of the relationship between Britain and India. The centre of gravity of Indian politics is now quite definitely in India itself, and, no matter what policy or course of action may be ordered from Whitehall, it can have no possible chance of final success if it run counter to the force of events and conditions in India. It is of the utmost importance that we should understand once and for all that India's political future is going to be settled by what happens in India and not by what is thought in London. This it is which invests the history of these years in India with such deep, such vital, significance, for what is now being written by Indian hands can never be wiped out by any others.

The announcement of the appointment of the Statutory Commission on 8th November was conveyed to the people of India in a personal statement by the Viceroy. Long and anxious thought was given by Lord Irwin to this statement in which he explained, with full understanding of, and sympathy for, the Indian point of view, the reasons which had finally decided His Majesty's Government to appoint a purely Parliamentary Commission. Then came a passage of great importance which was to prove an important

factor in deciding some of the waverers to come down on the side of co-operation with Sir John Simon and his colleagues

'We should,' said Lord Irwin, 'be making a great mistake if we supposed that these matters were purely constitutional, or could be treated merely as the subject of judicial investigation. Indian opinion has a clear title to ask that in the elaboration of a new instrument of government, their solution of the problem, or their judgment on other solutions which may be proposed, should be made an integral factor in the examination of the question and be given due weight in the ultimate decision. It is therefore essential to find means by which Indians may be made parties to the deliberations so nearly affecting the future of their country.'

Lord Irwin then went on to explain that His Majesty's Government, whilst not dictating any particular procedure to the Commission, thought that their task would be made much easier if they invited a Committee chosen from the non official members of both Houses of the Central Legislature to convey its views to the Committee in any manner chosen by the latter. It was also suggested that a similar procedure should be adopted with the provincial legislatures. Lastly, when His Majesty's Government had formed their opinions on the Commission's Report they proposed to refer them for consideration by a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament before asking Parliament to accept them. At this Joint Committee stage it was intended to invite delegations from the Indian Central Legislature to attend and confer with the Joint Committee, and also to ask any other bodies

to state their views whom the Joint Committee might desire to consult.

Before publishing this statement, Lord Irwin consulted with the members of his Council and with the Provincial Governors as to the best way of preparing the ground for such a momentous document. He himself invited the chief All-India leaders of every political party to a private and personal interview in Delhi, in which he disclosed the terms of the forthcoming announcement to each of his visitors, asked for his opinion, answered his questions, and tried to meet his objections. Mr. Gandhi was among those invited, and the occasion was of more than common interest because this was the first time that he and Lord Irwin had met face to face, and at this interview began that attachment—no other word will do—for Lord Irwin which was to grow stronger with every personal contact and was not to be weakened, even after Mr. Gandhi had decided to renew his non-co-operation and after he went again to prison. This move of Lord Irwin's undoubtedly affected the imagination of the Indian people very deeply, and the European press also approved of it in the warmest terms. And it was, in fact, a new departure in Indian politics for the Viceroy to take Indian leaders into his confidence before taking action of first-class political importance. Some of his visitors, it is true, found themselves unable to agree with him, but, nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that it was this bold and imaginative personal action of his which made thoughts of civil disobedience or violent opposition to the Commission unthinkable. The Viceroy's example was followed by the Provincial Governors, who, each in his own province, invited the

chief provincial political leaders and important non-officials, including newspaper editors, for the same purpose as the Viceroy had invited his visitors to Delhi. It is worth noticing too, that only one person of all those invited, all over India, was guilty of a breach of confidence. Some of the names of the members of the Commission were made known by this person, and this one unfortunate incident led to an outcry in the English newspapers and even to questions in Parliament, quite out of proportion to the importance of the breach of confidence. The fact remains that the lapse did absolutely no harm, whilst the beneficial results of the Viceroy's friendly move were great and unquestionable.

Between the publication of the statement and the arrival of the Commission, Lord Irwin had to be a good deal away from headquarters because of the convention mentioned earlier that the Viceroy should spend Christmas in a place where he could get into touch with the non-official opinion, and thus correct what might be a false perspective of the scene if viewed exclusively through the medium of official reports. This time, before going to Calcutta as usual, Lord Irwin decided to go to Bombay and the west of India. We have already seen what an important part is played in Indian economics, and in all legislation, or other government action appertaining thereto, by Bombay interests. If Calcutta is the creation of British enterprise and finance, Bombay is equally a monument to the business and financial capacity of Indians. The dominant interests in Bombay in business, in stock and bullion broking, and in money market operations generally, are Indian. Their wealth and the vastness of their interests give the leaders of Bombay business a

exercised, and inevitably and rightly exercised, in any Government's economic policy by considerations of the effect which it will have on the financial interests and machinery of the country. And since politics and economics are, in these days, inextricably intertwined, the influence of Government policy on business operations and all that they mean for the welfare and stability of the country must be taken into account by responsible ministers. Now, in this country the financial interests do not intervene actively as such in politics, and the behaviour of the City of London in the summer of 1931 was actually a source of strength to the Government. It is not difficult to imagine the embarrassment which the City could have caused to the Government had its heads attempted to force their own views on the Government. But this is precisely what does happen in India, and Bombay City is the Indian analogue of the City of London. Lord Irwin, therefore, showed not only a high degree of political sense in going down to Bombay, but also a considerable amount of courage. But, unfortunately, after he had been in Bombay for a few days, he fell ill with fever, and had to cancel all his engagements there, and, later, his visit to Calcutta. Leaving personal factors out of the question, Lord Irwin's illness at this juncture was, from the point of view of high politics, disastrous. Throughout his viceroyalty he remained accessible to Indian visitors to an extraordinary degree, and in Bombay, had his health permitted, he would have met the most important business and political leaders. In that city there were certain sections, notably those Moslems who afterwards decided not to co-operate with the Statutory Commission but were still wavering, who



might conceivably have been won over to co-operation, and there were good reasons for believing that Lord Irwin's own presentation of the case for the decision of His Majesty's Government in the matter of the Commission might have led these sections to adopt a course different from the one which they in fact adopted. By this time, the majority of the Moslems, the powerful Justice Party, many of the Sikhs, the important business community of the Jains, and others, were clearly moving towards co-operation, and there was a good deal of unsettlement of opinion elsewhere. It is not, therefore, an exaggeration to say that had Lord Irwin been able to get into personal touch, as he had hoped, with the leaders of Bombay political and business interests, there might have been a good deal more co-operation with the Commission than there was, because, as we have seen, Bombay is very powerful and, like Lancashire, may be said to think twenty-four hours ahead of the rest of the country. However, it is idle to speculate on what might have been. At any rate, the amazingly friendly references made about him personally, even in extremist newspapers, caused Lord Irwin's illness to reveal the unique position which he occupied in India, and from this we may legitimately draw the inferences suggested above.

A superficial survey of the political situation in India at the beginning of 1928 would have shown a state of affairs not altogether unsatisfactory. The lines of the political spectrum had by this time almost arranged themselves, and, broadly speaking, the larger and more representative sections of the minority communities and special interests had decided to present their case to the Commission and to help it in its work. Even certain

sections of organised Hindu opinion in different parts of India were still waiting for events and had not entirely closed the door to co-operation, whilst the main strength of the Sikhs was, by now, thrown on the side of the Commission. It was known also that at least two or three of the Provincial Legislatures were determined to appoint committees to join with the Commission in the work of enquiry, and, while the attitude of others was doubtful, there were good grounds for hoping that most, if not all, of the provinces would, in the end, follow the lead about to be given by the Punjab, Burma, and Assam. Even in the Bengal and Bombay Councils, where the strongest opposition might have been expected, shrewd observers predicted handsome majorities for the co-operating members. It was quite clear, therefore, that the Commission was not simply going to fall flat. Nevertheless, there were one or two clouds on the horizon, and one very big cloud was the dubious attitude, to say the least, of the Legislative Assembly. There, the forces for and against the Commission were very closely balanced, and with some of the Moslems, under the lead of Mr Jinnah, apparently determined to join in the proposed boycott, it was clear that when the vote came to be taken in the Assembly on a formal resolution it was going to be a very close-run thing. And, of course, the action of the Legislative Assembly was of the highest importance. If it decided to co-operate it would mean that the centre of gravity of India's domestic politics would remain in the National Legislature, leaving the All-India National Congress, the All-India Liberal Federation, *and other non-co-operating bodies as merely sectional organisations.* A vote for non-co-operation, on the

other hand, would mean that for the time being the centre of gravity would shift, in effect, to these outside bodies which would thus control the political tactics, the attitude, and the opinions of large and important sections of vocal Indian political opinion.

But to those who looked below the surface the prospect was not so bright, and Lord Irwin by this time had not only had plenty of opportunities for this deeper examination but had used them. His travels to different parts of India and the innumerable interviews which he granted in Delhi and Simla, particularly during the sessions of the Legislature, to Indians of all classes and opinions, had put him in touch with the currents of opinion and state of feeling all over the country. In particular, his deep and continuous interest in the Hindu-Moslem situation and in the position of minority communities had strongly impressed on his mind the danger to India latent in the development now proceeding which would leave the boycott predominantly a Hindu movement. The tone of the Indian press in those days gave good grounds for anxiety, for there was a good deal of bickering and abuse between those newspapers which favoured the non-co-operating interests and those which were ranged on the side of co-operation. Certain spokesmen of the minority communities also made no secret of their intentions to take the opportunity presented by their appearance before the Commission to stress exclusively the claims of their own community. On the other hand, Hindu newspapers and spokesmen, and, in particular, Dr. Moonje, who by this time had become the accepted spokesman of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, were pointing out that no matter what

whose talk is of bullocks? He giveth his mind to make furrows and is diligent to give kine fodder.' Thus does the older generation of Anglo-Indian say with the writer of Ecclesiasticus. Nevertheless, there is a point beyond which this is not true, and that point is fast being reached in the Indian countryside, for times are hard and will become harder as the pressure of population on the means of subsistence increases, and this gives the Congress agent his text. He goes into the village and asks the people why they are poor, and why they cannot get more to eat for themselves and their families. Left to himself the villager would think instinctively of the money-lender and the amount he had to pay for the dowry of his daughter who was married the other day, and the cost of his latest litigation over the ownership of a piece of land or access to a well. The Congressman, however, has a much simpler and more satisfactory explanation. In effect, he says to the villager these words:

'God has given you a fertile country which allows us two harvests a year. You would have lots of food for yourself and your family if it were not taken away from you by the British, whose country is cold and barren, and who take your food for themselves.'

Of course this is crude and inflammatory, but it is very effective, and now, throughout the rural parts of India there is a slow rising surge of feeling, irrational, harmful to the peasants themselves, but not altogether unnatural in view of their circumstances and their limited knowledge. Certainly, it is not the less dangerous for these reasons. If the millions of Indian peasants are ever stampeded their first wrath will destroy landowners, money-lenders, and the moneyed

other communities or interests might say to the Commission, and no matter what the latter might decide, Hindu India had still to be reckoned with, and Hindus would not allow the country to be divided into a number of 'communal' provinces, with the Moslems in absolute command of a number of them. In a word, the trend of developments and of opinion was opening fundamental divisions between the different communities and parts of India, a process fraught with dangers of a very serious sort. Moreover, political agitation by this time had been carried to other classes of the people. More and more actively the emissaries of Congress were stirring up the countryside and rousing the villagers from their age-old apathy. It is repeatedly stated by many who know India well and speak on her affairs by very good warrant—the warrant conferred by years of service—that the seventy per cent or so of the people who live in her villages and hamlets know and care nothing about politics. Up to a point this is true. They do live remote from the things which agitate townsmen, and their chief concern is with the fall of rain, and the operations of sowing and reaping. Simple and illiterate as they mostly are, they cannot be expected to understand the matters in issue between their highly advanced Western-educated fellow-countrymen of the Legislatures and the businesses and the British Government. What does it matter to them what king rules in Delhi so long as the monsoon does not fail them, and the tax-gatherer and the money-lender leave them enough to feed and clothe themselves? 'How can we get wisdom from him that holdeth the plough and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen and is occupied with their labours,

Legislatures times without number, that the solution of this great problem of India is not a work for either England or India alone. In the past there has been a good deal of talk by both British and Indian spokesmen about the need for co-operation, but far too often each side has meant nothing more than that the other side should co-operate with it in carrying out a policy with the conception and preparation of which the other has had nothing to do. But, for Lord Irwin, with the weight of Indian administration on him, and with the final responsibility for momentous decisions which the Government of India was continually having to take, co-operation had a very different meaning. He knew, as everybody else knows who has to take part in the Government of India, that the load is becoming too heavy for the machine, and that it must be spread over a wider surface. He knew also that the co-operation which he sought from the Indian leaders must be co-operation on equal terms. This was a novel conception to many people in this country a few years ago. It is not so novel now after the Round Table Conference. In any case, it is the pith and marrow of Lord Irwin's policy in India.

Seeing these hidden springs of the Indian political movement, and continually feeling and testing their rising strength, Lord Irwin strove earnestly for co-operation with the Statutory Commission about to arrive in India, for he knew that with non-co-operation on the scale now threatened it must be impossible for Sir John Simon and his colleagues to get a complete picture of the Indian situation, or to comprehend properly the true character and the strength of the Indian Nationalist Movement. Recovered from his

classes in the towns, but the agitator either knows or cares nothing about this, and so the work of incitement goes on

Another of the classes to which political agitation has been carried is that of the educated youth of India. The Youth Movement is now organised and formidable, and in 1928 it was very much to the fore. Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subash Chandra Bose, the Bengali, were both busy with the work of organising educated youths for political action. But as the Youth Movement provided only one crown, and they were both eager to wear it, their relations with each other were not very cordial, and led to a certain waste of effort. Nevertheless, the movement was gaining strength to such an extent that, without exception, the old responsible leaders all over India definitely dissociated themselves from it, and many of them denounced it in set terms. Between the patient ignorant agriculturist, following his bullock behind his little wooden plough in the illimitable spaces of rural India, to the smart young townsman, with his Western education and his Western ideas and Western tastes, is the whole range of Indian life. The difference is wider than that between Brahmin and Untouchable. It is the difference which exists between different races, utterly alien from each other in ideas and outlook.

Yet all these discordant elements and movements are parts of the one Indian problem, which was pressing with growing weight on Lord Irwin as the months went by, and he knew that it would be necessary to dig deep to get right down to the tap root of it all. He also knew, what has been proclaimed in and out of Parliament and in and out of the Indian

Indeed, the whole speech is a revelation of the position which Lord Irwin had by now established for himself. Public pronouncements by high officials in India are apt to be of a somewhat emasculate character because of the fatal ease with which the direst offence can be given to a sensitive people smarting under disabilities which they believe unjust. But, by now, even the keenest critic of the Indian Government could not with any plausibility impugn either the good will or the genuine courtesy of Lord Irwin towards the people of India. The Legislative Assembly Chamber in which the speech was delivered was crowded with members of the two Houses. Every available inch of space in the galleries was packed with visitors, the brightly coloured head-dresses of the Indian men and glowing saris of their ladies forming an effective contrast to the sombreness of the ceremonial attire of the members on the floor of the House, like a gaily coloured blossom surmounting a stem and leaves of subfusc hue. From the scarlet, gold-embroidered throne on the President's dais Lord Irwin looked down on his audience, and as they looked up at the tall figure reading the measured words with grave emphasis, their eyes could not have missed a row of bright metal plaques on the panelling of the Chamber above and on both sides of the throne. For those gifted with imagination, there was a whole world of promise in those plaques which caught the hard, glaring sunlight of a brilliant February morning in Delhi and transmuted it into soft colours, sending blue and crimson and purple bars across the motes dancing in the shafts of sunlight. For these plaques were the heraldic devices of India and the other Dominions of the great



illness, he was able to address the Indian Legislature early in the winter session of 1928—on 2nd February, the day before the Commission was due to land in Bombay. Within a fortnight the Assembly was to debate the momentous issue of co operation or non-co-operation, and Lord Irwin's speech to the two Houses of the Legislature was a last earnest appeal for co operation, and a grave—and all the more effective because it was measured and restrained—indictment of certain features of the agitation against the Commission. There was a touch of lawful and very human indignation in the words in which he rebuked certain critics of the British Government in nominating an All British Commission.

'In the present case,' he said, 'British statesmen of all parties have stated in terms admitting of no mis conception that the appointment of a Parliamentary Commission was in no way intended as any affront to India. Time and again this assertion has been repeated, and I would ask in all sincerity by what right do leaders of Indian opinion, who are as jealous as I am of their own good faith, and would resent as sharply as I any refusal to believe their word, impugn the good faith and disbelieve the plain word of others? I would deny to no man the right to state freely and frankly his honest opinion, to condemn—if he wishes—the action of His Majesty's Government in this regard, or to say that they acted unwisely or in misapprehension of the true feeling that exists in India. That again is a matter of opinion. But what no man is entitled to say—for it is quite simply not true—is that His Majesty's Government sought to offer a deliberate affront to Indian honour and Indian pride.'

and work as Indians for India with the Commission. At any rate, he had done his part. He had talked with the most important leaders, he had spoken to the country through speeches which were reproduced in all the papers, and all his influence had been devoted to closing gaps between the communities in India, and between Nationalist political leaders and his Government and himself.

Next day, Sir John Simon and his party landed in Bombay to be met by excited crowds, some cheering him and carrying garlands and messages of welcome, others carrying black flags with the inscription which was to become so familiar to the Commission as they went through India: 'Simon go back.' But Sir John Simon and his colleagues went up to Delhi, where they stayed in the Western Hostel, which is the Government-owned and controlled establishment where large numbers of the members of the Indian Legislature live during the Delhi session. The Hostel was full of legislators, including some of the party leaders, and it was hoped that daily contact in the dining and public rooms would at any rate lead to the exchange of social amenities between members of the Commission and the Indian party leaders and their followers, even if no more important results followed. But it did not work out in this way, for, with one accord, Nationalist and Congress leaders observed a social boycott as complete as their political boycott afterwards was to become. But Sir John Simon still had a big gun in reserve. This was the terms on which he proposed to associate Indians with him in his enquiry according to the promise given in Lord Irwin's announcement of 8th November.

Whether the non-co-operating elements could have

Commonwealth of Nations And below them Lord Irwin was pointing out to India's representatives the road for India to take for her to find herself an accepted and acceptable member, resting in that Commonwealth as her device rests among theirs on the walls of her Parliament Chamber

Deep attention was paid to the Viceroy as he spoke Immediately to his left the veteran Pandit Motilal Nehru sat on his front bench—immobile and sphinx-like—his followers in their rough white homespun rising tier by tier behind him, betraying no sign of assent or dissent as Lord Irwin proceeded To their left came the Nationalists with their leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in spotless white from head to foot There was more sign of life here, for occasionally a member would glance at his neighbour with a quick nod or smile In front of Lord Irwin sat the Europeans and Moslems, solid and unemotional, with Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan, as rugged as his own frontier hills, and the tall aristocratic Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan catching the eye, and, lastly, on the Viceroy's right, the Government officials and the nominated members None of these men, perhaps, could have given his reasons for knowing that the gathering that day, and its sequel later in the vote of the Assembly on the question of co operating or not with the Commission, was a fateful occasion for India But fateful it was, and it may even turn out to have been a fatal occasion, using that word in its commonly accepted sense For as things have turned out, the split between the Majority and Minority communities has widened and deepened since that day, when Lord Irwin, in effect, asked them to think of themselves as Indians,

colleagues, and an equal number of Indian members of the Central Legislature chosen by the latter. This Joint Free Conference should sit and take evidence in regard to central subjects, and all memoranda and testimony submitted to the Conference should be scrutinised by the Indian wing who could, if necessary, have them explained on free and equal terms with their British colleagues. When provincial subjects were being discussed, Sir John proposed to add to the Joint Free Conference a Provincial Committee chosen from the Council of the province concerned to act in the same way as the Committee of the Central Legislature was to do in respect to central subjects. Further, Sir John suggested that all or some of the members of the Central Legislature Committee should sit with the Commission while the provincial evidence was being held. So far there was nothing to which anybody could take exception. But then the letter went on to deal with two points, of fundamental importance in Indian eyes as affecting the status of the Indian wing of the Commission and the effectiveness of their work. These two points related to the question of report by the Commission and the question of evidence other than that submitted by governmental agencies, central or provincial. The relevant passages from Sir John Simon's letter to the Viceroy in respect of these two points are as follows. In the matter of the report Sir John said:

'As regards the Report, it is, I feel, necessary to restate the true function of the Commission and its place in the general scheme which you announced last November. The Commission is in no sense an instru-

been brought over to co-operation even at this late hour must always remain a matter of speculation, but there are solid reasons for believing that they could. In the first place, the efforts of Lord Irwin himself, backed in certain provinces by men of outstanding ability and experience, like Sir Malcolm Hailey in the Punjab, and Sir Alexander Muddiman in the United Provinces, had left Indian leaders under no illusions as to the gravity of the step they would be taking by boycotting the Commission, and the continuous rally of Moslems, non-Brahmins, Sikhs, Depressed Classes and other minorities, of whom the first three of those above mentioned are very powerful forces in the life of India, reinforced the argument of the Viceroy and his lieutenants. But at this juncture, what was necessary was personal touch between Sir John Simon and the boycotting leaders. Clearly, Sir John and his colleagues, new to the country and knowing none of the political leaders personally, could not effect this liaison themselves, and before any intermediary of suitable standing and qualities could undertake the task one or two of the boycott leaders managed to handle the situation so as to make such personal contact impossible. Sir John, in the circumstances, could not delay this announcement of the terms on which he proposed to associate Indians with his Commission, because, of course, these would form one of the most important conditions of the decision in regard to boycott or non-boycott. Therefore, on 6th February, he sent a letter to Lord Irwin embodying these terms, and the letter was published the following day. Briefly, Sir John proposed that the Commission should take the form of a 'Joint Free Conference,' consisting of a Chairman, his British

that both might be presented to the King Emperor, and made public, at the same moment'

This argument was completely sound, and, as a matter of fact, it carried conviction. Naturally, if it had been possible to include the Indian members drawn from the Indian Legislature on exactly the same terms as the British members and let them sign the Report jointly with their British colleagues their status would have been all that could be desired, but then, of course, the Commission would have been exactly what Parliament had decided it should not be. In the Indian newspapers and in public speeches the argument put forward in this paragraph by Sir John Simon was opposed and derided, but, nevertheless, it was accepted by responsible persons who knew the elements of constitutional law.

It was around that passage of his letter in which he dealt with the second point that the most violent storm blew. Most Indian politicians to day are sensitive and suspicious to a degree which foreigners find very great difficulty in appreciating. Anything which might be twisted into an assertion that they are not in every respect the equal of their confreres in European countries arouses the most passionate resentment and provokes action which is apt to appear to the Western mind absurdly out of all proportion to the original offence, if offence there be. Also, they are profoundly suspicious of every action of their British rulers, and their suspicion gives rise to conduct which is often quite beyond the comprehension of the persons against whom it is directed. These qualities of sensitiveness and suspicion asserted themselves in full strength over the

ment either of the Government of India or of the British Government, but enters on the duty laid upon it by the King Emperor as a completely independent and unfettered body composed of Members of Parliament who approach Indian legislators as colleagues. It is not an executive or legislating body, authorised to pronounce decisions about the future government of India. Before these decisions can be reached, the full process, of which the present investigation is a first step, must be completed, including the opportunity for the views of the Indian Legislature, amongst other bodies, being presented by delegations in London to the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The present Commission is only authorised to report and make recommendations, and in this Report we desire to include a faithful account of the opinions and aspirations prevalent in India, and of the concrete proposals for constitutional reform so far as these are put before us. The British Commissioners, therefore, are bound to be solely responsible for the statement of the effect upon their own minds of the investigation as a whole. We shall report to the authority by which we have been constituted just as (if the Conference is set up) the Joint Committee would, we presume, be entitled to report its conclusions to the Central Legislature. It is obvious that those documents should be prepared and presented simultaneously. There are well-known constitutional means by which the document emanating from the Joint Committee and presented to the Central Legislature can be forwarded to and made available for the British Parliament. But, if the Indian Joint Committee would prefer it, we would make its Report an annexe to our own document, so

that both might be presented to the King Emperor, and made public, at the same moment.'

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passage in Sir John Simon's letter in which he discusses the second point referred to above:

'Some of us have had considerable experience of the method of Joint Conference as applied both to industrial and political questions, and it is quite clear to us that each side of the Conference will require, from time to time, to meet by itself. We see no reason, however, why evidence from public and representative bodies, and from individuals, should not normally be given to the Conference as a whole, just as evidence presented by or on behalf of the various Governments would be. If a case arises when this general plan cannot be followed, I should make no secret of it, and should ask my colleagues in the Joint Free Conference, when, as I hope, they learn to have faith in my sense of fairness, to accept from me such account of the matter as I can give them on behalf of the Commission, with due regard to the reason why the testimony has been separately received. I imagine that the Indian side may find occasions when they would think it well to act in the same way.'

It is difficult to see how Sir John Simon could have put his point better or more tactfully than he did, but, unfortunately, those to whom the argument was meant to appeal allowed their imagination to run riot. They foresaw Sir John Simon and his British colleagues sitting in secret conclave with European business interests, reactionary Indian witnesses, ultra-Conservative landlords, Government officials, and so on, and ultimately forming their conclusions mainly on what they heard from these sources.

It was precisely in connection with this point that Sir John Simon was entitled to receive assistance from experienced officials of the Government of India. They knew, or they ought to have known, that this question of the reception of confidential evidence by the British wing of the Commission was one of the things that most agitated Indian political circles, and that the omission of the proposal would have made a complete change in the spirit in which the letter was received. As a matter of fact, it became a dead letter very soon after publication, and it was never put into effect, for almost immediately, one of the most prominent members of the Council of State, Sir Sankaran Nair, who afterwards became Chairman of the Indian wing of the Commission, wrote to Sir John Simon asking him for information on this point. In reply, Sir John Simon explained that he hoped that the British wing would have to take evidence on only very rare occasions and that he would regard such occasions as definite departures from his main scheme. Still later, when the Punjab Council decided—the first of all the Provincial Councils in India—to co-operate with the Commission, the members chosen by the Council addressed a letter to Sir John Simon asking him to withdraw the suggestion to hold separate sittings. Sir John duly agreed, but, as far as the All-India political leaders and parties were concerned, it was too late, for, as we shall see, they had taken the fateful decision in favour of non-co-operation in the middle of February.

The main proposals of Sir John Simon's letter showed a statesmanlike appreciation of the situation and of Indian sentiment, and but for this one proposal would undoubtedly have received more serious attention from

the boycotting leaders than it did, and in all probability would have altered their decision. As it was, a meeting of the boycotting leaders issued the following statement within two or three hours after the letter had been put into their hands:

'We have most carefully considered the line of procedure indicated in the statement of Sir John Simon issued to-day. But our objections to the Commission as constituted, and the scheme as announced, are based on principles which remain unaffected by it. In the circumstances we must adhere to our decision that we cannot have anything to do with the Commission at any stage or in any form.'

A week later the whole question came to a head with a resolution moved in the Legislative Assembly by the late Lala Lajpat Rai, the Hindu Nationalist member in the Punjab, which declared that the whole basis and scheme of the Statutory Commission were not acceptable to the Assembly, which, in consequence, would have nothing to do with the Commission in any way or at any stage of its proceedings. A counter resolution proposing co-operation was moved by Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, leader of the Moslems in the Assembly. The debate was a long and fierce one. The arguments advanced on either side followed familiar lines and can be easily imagined by the reader, but there were one or two moments when the debate was lifted right above even the high level of interest which it sustained throughout. One of these was when Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, a Madras member nominated to represent the Depressed Classes, who, except by Government

nomination, have no chance of representation, welcomed the Commission on behalf of his hapless community because they could go to it and open their hearts in full confidence of justice at the hands of the mighty legislature which it represented. In front of him across the floor of the House as he spoke were the serried ranks of the Congress and Nationalist Parties, very many of them Brahmins, and every one of them Hindus of the higher castes. Behind Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah were thousands of years of such oppression and degradation as no European peoples have ever known, not even in the days of slavery. This was almost the first occasion on which an accredited representative of the Depressed Classes had spoken his mind so openly in any Indian Legislature, and the courage displayed was enormous. For the Rao Bahadur was breaking through mental and spiritual inhibitions forged and welded by uncounted generations of depression and deprivation of many of the fundamental rights of humanity. The House in front of him listened sullenly, and occasionally one of them would interject a remark when a particularly shrewd thrust or damaging statement was made. But the Moslems were in their element. They thumped the benches and roared applause as point after point went home, for it must be remembered that Islam is a great liberalising, democratic religion, and, like Christianity, admits of no castes or class distinctions within the bosom of religion.

Sir Basil Blackett, leader of the House, was also in his best fighting form, and he devoted a good deal of his speech to Mr. Jinnah, the leader of a few cross-benchier Moslems and Hindus, who had made known his

intention of joining in the boycott His light banter, after the heavy broadsides of the Opposition and the sombre vistas revealed by Rao Bahadur M C Rajah, caught the fancy of the House, and even the Opposition laughed with him as he compared the All-India Congress to a spider in the middle of its web, and Mr Jinnah and his party to the fly

'The spider may be hungry,' said Sir Basil, 'but why should the fly be in such a hurry?'

All this time Lord Irwin had kept in the closest touch with the Government front benchers and with various important non-official members of the House As in the case of the Currency Bill a year earlier, both sides made the most strenuous efforts to get every possible supporter they could, and the whipping on both sides was remorseless A member of the Nationalist Party, lying sick in Karachi, came up to vote in favour of Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution, but died before the vote could be taken This way and that the tide of opinion flowed, and Sir Basil Blackett's speech sent up the Government stock by several points But resentment and wounded pride, combined with vigorous party discipline among the Opposition, in the end turned the scale, and Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution was carried by the narrow majority of six in the second biggest division on record in the annals of the Legislative Assembly Immediately the result was declared a reporter of a Nationalist newspaper, sitting in the Press Gallery above the official benches, hurled an attache case down on the head of Sir Basil Blackett—it was to be bombs and pistol shots next year—whose personal efforts had so nearly given the victory to the Government, declaring that this was meant as a reply

to a speech delivered at Doncaster a few days previously by Lord Birkenhead Sir Basil Blackett was partially stunned, but, as an Indian clerk in the Finance Department telegraphed to the India Office, 'the Finance Member never entirely lost conscientiousness' Better still was Sir Basil's own contribution As anxious colleagues lifted him, half dazed, from his seat, he was heard murmuring the Horatian lines '*me truncus illapsus cerebro sustulerat, misu Faunus ictu dextra levasset*'

Thus ended the first round in the great fight for co operation with the Statutory Commission It was a fateful choice that the Hindu members of the Opposition in the Assembly, aided by a handful of Moslems, made that day, for, since then, in spite of the assembly of representatives of all communities and parties at the Round Table Conference, the division of India into two Indias—the India of the Hindus and the India of the minorities—has proceeded apace And the division is in deep and fundamental things, in matters which go right to the heart of government, matters which concern control of government, and now there is a constantly growing desire and determination to have in the new Constitution a balance of powers between the different communities, like the balance of power between the rival nations in the old diplomatic order of Europe This is the importance of the vote taken in the Legislative Assembly on 18th February 1928, and there were a few prescient observers in more than one part of the House who knew and deplored it Anger had triumphed over reason—a natural and very human reaction to the exclusion of Indians from the Statutory Commission, but one whose harmful importance should not be

minimised on that account. For the second time in these years of destiny, Indian leaders had made a choice and taken a step which could never be withdrawn or retraced. At a time when the interests of India demanded, as never before, that all her peoples and communities should think and act together, words were spoken and acts performed which could have no other result than to drive them fatally apart. In spite of all that has happened in a hundred and fifty years of British rule, the British power is still the one great centralising, unifying force in India, and, hard and distasteful as the terms of co-operation with the Commission may have seemed to some, it would have been infinitely better had they been accepted. Had Hindus and Moslems and other minorities spoken with discordant voices when giving evidence, and, even, in the counsels of the Joint Free Conference, even in that case it would have been better than some co-operating and some non co-operating. For, as we know, the co-operators were the vastly greater part of the minority communities, and, as things have turned out, they and the majority community have been driven farther and farther along divergent roads, down which they appear to be hurrying to irreconcilable enmity and final disruption.

## CHAPTER IX

### INDIA DIVIDED

FROM now onwards, the march of politics in India is swift, full of changes, and leads us past events of dramatic quality and of great and permanent importance for the future of India. Almost before we realise it we find that, whatever the letter of the constitutional law may say, India is, in fact, in a position to discuss her future on more or less equal terms with the British Government. This is a change of great, indeed, of startling import, the significance of which has not yet been seen or understood. The appointment of the Statutory Commission must, in any case, have been a prelude to a new age for India, an age in which all her old political landmarks had to alter and in which her relations with Great Britain had to be modified to a greater or lesser extent. This would have happened even had the Commission originally included Indian members and even had there been no boycott. There was no thought of a Round Table Conference, of the sort which has since been held, when the Commission was appointed, and the far-reaching scheme of an All-India Federation of both British and Princely India was not present in anybody's mind as a thing of practical politics in the near future. Mr Gandhi was still below the political horizon, limiting his part in politics to pontifical utterances in his newspaper, *Young India*, and to philosophic discourse on the virtues



of hand-loom spinning, or the evil characteristics of Western materialism, to an increasing stream of foreign journalists, and other visitors from overseas. There were not wanting even experienced Indian observers who said that his picturesque and potent personality and incalculable actions would never again influence the course of practical politics in India or draw the lesser political luminaries from the paths which they would have followed in his absence. There was no reason to believe that at the beginning of 1928 Mr. Gandhi would come back into the political arena from which he had, to all intents and purposes, been ejected by the late Mr. C. R. Das and his chief lieutenants at the end of 1924. But the swift movement of events in 1928 was to threaten the unity even of the All-India Congress and nobody but Mr. Gandhi could avert a split. So, by the end of the year, Mr. Gandhi was back in politics and firmly at the head of the Congress Party once more.

Important as this development was, it was not more important than the position reached by the early days of 1929 in Hindu-Moslem relations, for steps had by then been taken by the leaders of both communities, and by their followers, which may lead to the literal disruption of India unless British and Indian—but, primarily, and almost entirely, Indian—statesmanship can open a way along which these steps might be retraced.

During 1928 again, India was reminded, as she had been very rarely reminded during the long history of the Pax Britannica, that she is a continental country with many gates giving access to her territories, and that away across her North West Frontier—her heel of

Achilles—events were on the march there also which touched her deeply, and which must touch her more deeply as time goes on. King Amanullah, succeeding to a medieval Asiatic sovereignty, had become fired with the idea of making his kingdom into another Japan, and India is very close, and her fat lands and traditional wealth have, in past ages, proved an irresistible lure to the people living among and behind the frontier hills. But King Amanullah wanted to move too fast. In his reforming zeal he laid rough hands on some of the dearest prejudices of some of his subjects, and by the end of the year insurrection had made his position desperate. The frontier tribes between India and Afghanistan were on the tiptoe of expectation, ready to strike on either side of the border as opportunity befell. But the Government of India held its hand heavily on them, and meanwhile, the British planes roared over the wintry Suleiman Mountains, bringing back a daily freight of human cargo, chiefly women and children, foreign residents in the Afghan capital. Day by day, the work of rescue went on without a hitch, a feat so far without compare in the annals of any other Air Force. Far away to the East, China was well in the throes of the titanic confusion which has deepened year by year and of which no one can foretell the outcome. There was, indeed, storm over Asia in 1928, and it is still raging. Here we can follow only the fortunes of India, but it must be remembered that she is part of Asia as well as part of the British Empire, and Asia is no longer the unchanging East. Over India in 1928 extended the long, cold shadow of Communist propaganda. There is very little knowledge of Communism and its ideals in

India and still less sympathy for it. But during the year or two prior to 1928 a few of the intellectuals of the Left Wing in India had made the usual conducted tour to Russia, where they had seen the façade erected for the edification of such birds of passage, and Communists in that country and elsewhere were paying a good deal of attention to the Indian press. Much of the propaganda was exceedingly successful, and, to a casual reader, appeared anything but Communist. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of such writings was to produce sympathy for the Russian experiment, and wherever there was hunger and misery in the country, there the Communist ideas naturally enough began to take hold. One of the outstanding features of this year of swift development and change was the prevalence of industrial unrest. Strikes multiplied throughout the country, more than two hundred being reported between April 1928 and April 1929. A prolonged general strike in the Bombay textile mills inflicted great harm on the economic life of the city, and led to grave unsettlement of the working classes, with results which were not quick to exhaust their influence. Railways, the Calcutta jute industry, and the great Tata steel works at Jamshedpur were all among the industries affected, and in some places serious clashes between strikers and the Government forces could not be averted. Truly, a new element has been imported into Indian unrest during these recent years, and the patient, long-suffering masses of the people will not always be content to be used as pawns in the Congress game of political chess. They have been taught things which they will not forget and ideals have been held up to their eyes towards which

they continue to work, whether their Government is a British or an Indian one. Of all the developments of these years, it is doubtful if any will prove to be of greater lasting importance than the stirring of Indian labour from its long apathy. Already it is showing signs that it will not long submit to being used as a springboard from which smart young Congressmen may take a leap into the higher ranks of political leadership, and it is by no means impossible that one of the most fruitful forces working for inter-communal unity will originate in the trade union movement. But no Government can allow its working classes to be exploited by Communist agitators from outside, and for some time past, such exploitation had been attempted. The action which was forced upon the Government of India by this very sinister development led to one of the gravest, and certainly the most unpleasant, episode in the history of India during the past few years.

Thus, the Indian scene from now onwards is full of movement, but, unfortunately, it is, all too often, the movement of strife and unrest between the different sections of the Indian people, or between some of them and the Government, an unrest which, in some of its phases, looks outside India to wider horizons and strives after objectives outside the scope of Indian politics. The controversy which has raged with ever-increasing violence around British rule in India, since Indian events of first class importance became front page news all over the world, has tended unduly to simplify and restrict the problem which India presents, not only to British statesmanship, but, also, to herself and her people. It is not, as enemies of Britain allege,

a simple problem of a people struggling to be free and held down by a selfish and superior force, nor is it what so many apologists for British rule depict, namely, a vast population of simple, backward, and much-divided people being stirred up against a rule, which at heart they love, by a few discontented intellectuals. Enough has been said already to show that the roots of the problem are many and go deep, and that its elements, human, historic, economic, and political are sufficiently numerous and heterogeneous to baffle comprehension. Fortunately, economic conditions were still favourable during 1928, but the Wall Street crash and the ensuing crisis in world economics and politics were not very far ahead, and were to produce effects in India not less powerful and dangerous because they have been masked and hidden by the prevailing political discontents, of which they became a new and strong element.

The first impulse of the boycotting sections, encouraged as they were by the vote in the Assembly described in the previous chapter, was to try to find a basis of unity among themselves. Most of the boycotters were Hindus, but a strong wing of the All-India Moslem League was included, and, naturally, the first instinct, indeed, the first necessity, was to try to find the long-sought-for and always elusive Hindu-Moslem settlement. By this time it had become generally recognised that the rejection of Lord Irwin's offer to help personally in the work of reconciliation was a mistake, how great a mistake had been shown by the whole course of Hindu-Moslem relations since the end of 1927. In the state of feeling in which the more responsible leaders of the two communities found

themselves in 1927, and with Lord Irwin's personal prestige and the undeniable trust reposed in him by both communities, there is no telling what might have been done had those who could speak for their communities gathered round a table with Lord Irwin. But the golden opportunity had been allowed to slip and could not recur. One unity conference after another was held, but, unfortunately, the leader or the convener had either to be a Hindu or a Moslem, and, of course, there was nobody else with anything like Lord Irwin's unique position and influence. Mr Gandhi had burnt his fingers at the end of 1924 in the most ambitious unity conference hitherto held, and was not going to repeat the experiment, even if the Moslems, and, it must be added, some of the Hindus, were prepared to let him, which was doubtful. And, in fact, the unity conferences of 1928 were foredoomed to failure, because the majority of Moslems held aloof from them, took no part or interest in them, and would never be bound by them. Nevertheless, the attempts persisted until they came to open and complete failure at the end of the year, such failure that the boycotting wing of Moslems, from that time onwards, were at one with their co-operating colleagues in confining their attention primarily to their own claims and safeguards.

Whilst these Hindu-Moslem negotiations were proceeding with steadily decreasing momentum, another and broader enterprise, broader because one of its foundations had to be a Hindu-Moslem settlement, occupied the attention of the boycott leaders. This was an attempt to draw up an agreed Constitution for India which should represent the maximum amount of agreement possible among Indian political parties and

thus be a strong, and, it was hoped, successful rival to any proposals which the Simon Commission might put forward. A permanent body was formed by the boycott leaders, under the title of the All Parties Conference, All-Parties here being understood, of course, as all the boycotting parties, because those sections of opinion which had decided to co operate with the Commission never took any share in the proceedings. Such an attempt would have been made in any case, but impetus was given to the activities of the boycotters by the speech made by Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords when he asked the House to agree to the submission to His Majesty of the names of the proposed members of the Statutory Commission. A great part of the speech was naturally devoted to explaining the reasons why no Indians were appointed to the Commission, and Lord Birkenhead had to enter in some detail into the divisions of opinion and of interests in India. Discussing the consequences of appointing Indians in these circumstances to the Commission, he said

‘Had we proceeded on those lines we should have found ourselves with a Commission of some eighteen or twenty people. That such a body would be convenient for the task assigned to them no instructed person, I believe, will seriously contend. But let us attempt to imagine the resulting situation had a body so unwieldy been in fact appointed. Does anyone suppose that there would have been a unanimous Report? There may not be a unanimous Report now. But at any rate we shall have a report which proceeds upon the same general point of view and principle. But what would

be the Report from a body such as I have indicated? What guidance would it give to Parliament in the immensely difficult task that will await the Parliament of one year, or two or three years from now? It is obvious—because the tension and the acuteness to-day of these unhappy communal quarrels are greater in my judgment than they have been for some twelve or thirteen years in Indian history—that you would have a very strong partisan Hindu Report, you would have a very strong Moslem Report, and you would have three or four other dissenting Reports from various sections deeply interested in the decisions which are taken.’

The Indian newspapers and many of the Indian politicians took deep umbrage at Lord Birkenhead’s words, which were described as a challenge to India to produce an agreed Constitution. This challenge was taken up by the All-Parties Conference, but at the very outset of their labours they encountered a severe disappointment in the attitude of certain Provincial Councils and the Council of State towards the Statutory Commission. In quick succession the Punjab, Assam, and Burma Councils and the Council of State decided to appoint committees from among their members to co-operate. And during the succeeding months every Provincial Council in India, except one, decided to follow the example of the three provinces mentioned above. In many ways the Provincial Councils are a much truer guide to political feeling in India than the Central Legislature, for reasons which are easy to understand. Dyarchy, by giving to Indian politicians in the provinces the actual handling of



administrative powers, and a measure of responsibility to the Councils, has tended, throughout the whole history of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, to attract the most influential and practical-minded men to the Provincial Councils. The Council of State has, throughout, been composed of Indians distinguished in all walks of life, in law, in finance, in business and in public service, but its members, on the whole, have not been professional politicians. The Legislative Assembly, on the other hand, except when it was boycotted during its earlier years by the Congress, has always had as members a handful of 'All-India' leaders who have had sitting behind them in the Chamber, men, for the most part, of no particular distinction or influence. The decisions of the Provincial Councils were, therefore, of very great importance, but this was obscured because, naturally, the Indian press preferred to dwell on the doings of the boycotting leaders, many of whom were All-India leaders like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Malaviya, Mr Jayakar, Mr Jinnah and others whose names were also familiar to people abroad. In any case, the All-Parties Conference functioned against these growing disappointments provided by the Provincial Legislatures, and also against the ever-increasing refractoriness of its material. For, almost at once, and inevitably, its work resolved itself into a discussion of the Hindu-Moslem problem. For weeks, discussions dragged on with diminishing momentum and growing friction until the Conference was fain to turn to that last infirmity of Conferences, namely, the reference of difficult questions to sub-committees. Two sub-committees were formed, one to enquire into the separation of Sind from

the Bombay Presidency, and its elevation to the status of a Governor's province, and the other to enquire into the very thorny problem presented by the electoral system. The great importance of the Sind question will appear later on, when the development of these months in Moslem politics are discussed. In the upshot, no definite conclusions were ever reached by these sub-committees, and even within the All-Parties Conference, Hindu-Moslem antagonisms reached such a pitch that in the early summer the Conference appeared to be on the verge of violent disruption. From this fate it was saved by personal appeals from Mrs. Besant, Pandit Motilal Nehru and the leader of the tiny band of Moslems who belonged to the Congress, a Dr. Ansari, who flits in and out of the events of these succeeding months like an embarrassed stage super, brought out by the Congress leaders when they think that he can be useful to them to prove that the Congress is something more than a Hindu body, and retreating into the wings when the annoyance of the real Moslem leaders becomes sufficiently acute to threaten unpleasant exposures of these manoeuvres. The dangerous corner was rounded, but only for a time, and only by the device of appointing another sub-committee. Two sub-committees of the All-Parties Conference having failed to solve a part of the Hindu-Moslem problem, another sub-committee was given the task of drawing up a Constitution for All-India, of which, of course, the first and principal foundation must be a settlement of the whole Hindu-Moslem problem. The sub-committee chosen was, it is true, as strong as it could be in the circumstances, and included in particular two of the ablest and most

distinguished men in all India, namely, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. But their task was a hopeless one. Even within this small sub-committee of six or seven persons there were sharp differences of opinion, and, for a time, it was very doubtful whether any report would emerge. However, owing chiefly to the determination of the two gentlemen mentioned above, and to their devoted personal labour, a report, subsequently well known under the title of the Nehru Report, was published in August 1928.

It should be remembered that all this time the tide of political feeling and excitement in India had been slowly rising. Moslem opinion hardened more and more as the months went on in favour of presenting the Moslem case to the Commission, and the failure of the two sub-committees of the All-Parties Conference sapped the determination even of the boycotting wing of Moslems, and, as we shall see shortly, the publication of the Nehru Report was to range the whole Moslem community of India almost without exception in one camp in opposition to the Hindus. Within a month of the publication of the Nehru Report, moreover, all but one of the nine Provincial Legislative Councils had declared their intention to co-operate with the Commission. But over against these developments was a sinister development on the Left Wing of Indian politics, and out beyond it in the dark jungle of revolutionary activity. Survivors of the old murder clubs of Bengal were becoming active again. In a different direction men like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose, having neither the character nor the intellectual equipment to lead men in

regular political parties, had turned their attention to inflammable youths in the schools and colleges, and to the simple workers in the fields and factories. Both these classes had common characteristics in their ignorance of life and affairs and in their consequent incapacity for absorbing without evil effects the intoxicating propaganda served out to them. The Youth Movement was becoming a serious matter, for the schoolboys and university students could supply large numbers of the pickets and volunteers of various sorts which have been a feature of the agitations of the last two or three years. And already women were beginning to appear for so called political services—a new and sinister development. Between the first appearance of women pickets and the murder of a British officer by Bengali girls only a short time has elapsed. Thus, the summer of 1928 must be thought of as a time of preparation, preparation by the Government for the appearance of the Statutory Commission in the autumn, by the boycotters, for the frustration of the Commission's work and the presentation to India of a draft Constitution which, it was hoped, would carry the day against any other, by the Moslems, for the big fight for claims and safeguards which already they dimly perceived were of fundamental importance and would lead to a long, strenuous conflict in which all their strength and intelligence would be needed, by the leaders of the outer fringes of the extreme of extremist politics for the confusion and anarchy which they hoped would follow on the breakdown of the work of the All-Parties Conference, and, they hoped also, of the Statutory Commission. It is in vain that one looks for any really bright spot in the

Indian scene during these months. The comparative fewness of Hindu-Moslem riots as compared with preceding months may seem such a bright spot, but, unfortunately the riots, though few, were sanguinary. Also, it is true that the antagonism which hitherto had shown itself in riots and fighting was now tending to manifest itself more peacefully in an increasing attention to the organising and solidifying of Moslem opinion prior to the coming struggle over the questions of constitutional and political importance in issue between them and the Hindus.

The publication of the Nehru Report was to prove, in the end, an event of importance second only to the appointment of the Statutory Commission. For, just as the Commission ranged political opinion all over India in a series of definite groups, so the Nehru Report sifted the boycotting elements, with the result that the Moslems fell out and ultimately ranged themselves with the bulk of their co-religionists.

With the demand for dominion status made in the Report, and with the structure of the executive and legislative bodies proposed, the Moslems had no complaint. The separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency and its elevation, in company with the North-West Frontier districts, to the status of full provinces were recommended, whilst great attention was paid to the rights and safeguards of minority communities. All these were things to please the Moslems, but there was one fatal flaw. This was the recommendation of joint electorates throughout India for all legislative bodies, central and provincial. There was to be no reservation of seats for Moslems except in provinces where they were in a minority. This was a

dire thrust at the Moslem demand for the majority of seats in the Bengal and Punjab Councils, and, also, at their claim, passionately held and advocated, for the continuance of the system of separate electorates. Here, the authors of the Report were in a dread dilemma. If they decided in one way, they antagonised the Moslems; if in another way, they gave mortal offence to Hindus. So they compromised by conceding some of their most cherished demands to each side.

It will be seen that the Report was a courageous, and, on the whole, a fair attempt to meet all interests and claims, including those of Europeans and other minorities. The All-Parties Conference arranged to meet at Lucknow at the end of August to discuss the Report, but, even during the few days between the publication and the Lucknow meeting, signs of dissatisfaction appeared amongst certain minorities, particularly the Sikhs, and very ominous mutterings indeed arose from the side of the Moslems. Very significant was the fact that the leader of the Moslem malcontents was Maulana Shaukat Ali, who had hitherto been the mainstay and prop of the little band of Left Wing Moslems who remained more or less affiliated to the Congress and had kept the name of the Khilafat Committee as a memorial of the old Khilafat agitation of 1920 and onwards, when, for a time, the Moslems had found themselves in the van of political agitation with Mr. Gandhi and his Congressmen. From the outset, Maulana Shaukat Ali adopted a stiff, uncompromising tone and made it quite clear that the limits of concession, as far as he was concerned, had been reached in the agreement comprised in the resolution passed at the meeting of the All-India

National Congress at Madras in the previous December 1927. On the other hand, Dr. Moonje, the leader of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, was also in a fighting mood, for, in the proposal to make Sind into a separate province on the conditions suggested in the Nehru Report he saw a deadly threat to the national unity of India. It was bad enough to have communal electorates, he said, but it would be ruinous to all their hopes of an Indian nation in the future to have communal provinces. He, therefore, was prepared to oppose the proposals relating to Sind. So, once again we have the old head-on collision between Hindu-Moslem views, and it must be remembered that the Moslems represented in the All-Parties Conference and on the sub-committee which drew up the Nehru Report, represented the Left Centre and Left Wing of Moslem political opinion—men who were prepared to go much further and make greater concessions than the vast majority of their co-religionists. If these men would not accept the Report, what hope could there be that their more conservative or more communally minded fellows would accept it?

The All-Parties Conference met in Lucknow to discuss the Nehru Report on 28th August. The basis of the Report, as we have seen, was that India should have full responsible government of the kind which we now call dominion status, with all the implications of that very comprehensive term. Accordingly, the main resolution moved at the Lucknow meeting claimed this status for India, but in order to placate the school of thought represented by Jawaharlal Nehru and the students and schoolboys who made up his following, the resolution was worded as follows:

‘Without restricting the liberty of action of those political parties whose goal is complete independence, this Conference declares:

‘(1) that the form of government to be established in India should be responsible, that is to say, a government in which the executive should be responsible to a popularly elected legislature possessing full and plenary powers,

‘(2) that such form of government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion.’

A very illuminating insight into the real springs of Indian political opinion and action at this time and later is afforded by the subsequent proceedings of the meeting. For the next important item to be discussed was the future of Sind, regarding which the following resolution was moved:

‘Simultaneously with the establishment of government in accordance with the Nehru Committee Report, Sind shall be separated from Bombay and constituted a separate province provided that:

‘(1) after enquiry it is found (a) that Sind is financially self-supporting, (b) in the event of its being found that it is not financially self-supporting, on the scheme of separation being laid before the people of Sind in its financial and administrative aspects, that the majority of inhabitants favoured the scheme and expressed their readiness to bear the financial responsibility of the new arrangement.

‘(2) that the form of government in Sind shall be the same as in other provinces under the Nehru Constitution, and



‘(3) that the non-Moslem minority in Sind shall be given the same privileges in the matter of representation in the Provincial and Central legislatures as Moslem minorities are given under the Nehru Committee report in areas where they are in the minority.’

The caution and hesitation visible in every sentence of this resolution are apparent. It led to a discussion as long and animated as that on the truly fundamental issue raised by the first resolution, and, although the meeting accepted the Sind resolution unanimously, it was perfectly obvious that the acceptance was a mere formality and that nothing at all had been settled or solved by it. Other resolutions adopted by the meeting related to the extension of reforms to the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan and to the adoption of a system of general electorates based on adult suffrage, coupled with a denial of any reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab. These resolutions again were purely formal, because the Hindus had by no means made up their minds on the subject of the frontier, whilst the proposals regarding electorates and non-reservation of seats in the Punjab had not the faintest chance of acceptance by the vast majority of Moslems.

The storm broke immediately the Lucknow meeting ended, Maulana Shaukat Ali opening it in words as picturesque as his own personality. As a young man, he said, he had been a keen owner of greyhounds, but he had never seen greyhounds deal with a hare as the Hindus proposed to deal with the Moslems. In a word, so far from anything having been settled between the Hindus and the other minorities, particularly the

Moslems, the seeds of a dangerous and lasting discord had been sown, as the event was to prove, and that no later than the next week. For as the Lucknow meeting ended the autumn session of the Legislative Assembly opened. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the chief signatory to the Report which bears his name, was leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, and the normal course of action would have been for him to bring forward a resolution asking the Government of India to consider the Nehru Report. He did not do so, nor did he allow any other member of his party, or any person with whom he had any influence to raise the question of the Report in the Assembly, either directly or indirectly, because he knew that any debate on it would have given rise to a bitter Hindu-Moslem struggle inside the House in which not only the Nehru Report but the whole structure of anti-Commission boycott would have foundered, never to be raised again. As it was, many of the Moslem members of the Legislative Assembly, accompanied by members of various Provincial Councils, issued a manifesto condemning the 'communal' parts of the Nehru Report, and among the signatories were those of members of the Congress Party itself. From this moment onwards, the Congress Party became all but completely a Hindu body and gradually assumed in the eyes of Moslems that character of chief opponent of their claims and safeguards which it holds to-day.

The importance of this development should be understood for it is one of the main landmarks on the long Via Dolorosa of Hindu-Moslem relations. From 1928 onwards, there is quite definitely a new model of Hindu-Moslem antagonism which shows itself in

organised political action for political ends. It is something deeper, more enduring, more embracing in its objectives than the old traditional, semi-instinctive antagonism which vented itself in street fights, and stone-throwing, and quarter staff play on days of religious ceremonies or festivals. The Moslems are manœuvring for position in readiness for the coming of responsible self-government, which means government by majority rule, and their determination and staying power should not be underrated.

Towards the end of 1928 other clouds were banking up on the horizon, all of them very much bigger than a man's hand. In the autumn session of the Legislature two Bills were introduced, one by the Government, and the other by a private member, Mr S N Haji, a member of an Indian shipping company, both of which were to give rise to very considerable storm and to add immensely to the burden carried by Lord Irwin personally. The Government Bill was the Public Safety Bill, designed to combat the dangers arising to India from Communist activities. Foreign Communists could be dealt with by the Executive Government under various laws, but there was no means of checking the activities of Communist agents in India who were British subjects. The proceedings at its first introduction were purely formal, but the strength of the opposition to it was obvious enough, and in the end the Government found itself embroiled in one of the bitterest disputes in which it has so far found itself with the Left Wing of the Opposition. Mr Haji's Bill proposed to reserve the coastal traffic of British India and of the continent of India to Indian shipping interests. In spite of Mr Haji's disclaimer, the Bill did

propose discrimination, and, even, expropriation on racial grounds, and it has proved to be a very disturbing element in the relations between non-official Europeans in India and Indians. For years past, these relations had been steadily growing more cordial, and in many ways the points of view of both non-official Europeans and Indians on political and general constitutional progress had been steadily approximating to each other. But this Bill was unquestionably a danger signal, which, as innumerable speeches and publications since made have shown, has gravely perturbed those Europeans whose businesses are situated in India, and later gave rise to a very difficult situation during the Round Table Conference, a situation which even now has not been cleared up. Mr Haji had the support of the whole of the Indian Opposition in the Assembly. One of his main points was that certain British shipping interests had obtained a monopoly of the coastal trade of the country which was inflicting great economic injury on India. The Moslems took practically no part in the controversy, which developed into a somewhat bitter racial struggle. Sir George Rainy, the Member for Commerce, showed that the proposals contained in the Bill would injure, not help, Indian shipping and Indian ports, but all to no avail, and a mere handful of Indian members voted with the Government. The position left by this incident was a serious one. Its effects on European non official opinion in India we have seen. Its effects in this country were even more widespread and important, and it cannot be denied that Mr Haji's Bill has had a great effect in inducing in business and financial circles here a deep distrust of the possible actions of Indian

Home Rule Governments of the future British opponents of the extension of political reforms to India have found it a very useful argument, and it would be idle to deny that the strong feeling aroused among the great majority of Indian members of the Assembly by this Bill, and their persistence in voting for it even after Sir George Rainy's measured analysis—obviously dispassionate and authoritative—of the baneful results which it would produce on Indian trade and commerce and on India's credit with the outside world, gave rise to serious and justified apprehensions. It has been condemned in uncompromising terms by Lord Inchcape, and if the City of London is doubtful about Indian credit under Home Rule and wants any more political advance to be accompanied by financial safeguards, many of the roots of their distrust can be traced to this Bill of Mr Haji's. From the beginning, Lord Irwin took the deepest personal interest in it, and he went so far as to hold at the Viceregal Lodge meetings between himself and Sir George Rainy and representatives of European and Indian interests concerned to see if some compromise could be reached. But Indian opinion has proved to be quite uncompromising.

But even this did not exhaust the capacity of this session of the Indian Legislative Assembly for mischief. For during this session Mr V J Patel, President of the Legislative Assembly, began that course of open hostility and public disputation with certain high Government officials which embittered the public life of the country and crippled the usefulness of the Assembly to a quite extraordinary degree until Mr. Patel's resignation and subsequent imprisonment.

Mr. Patel was unfortunately given an opportunity to enter on his quarrel with the Government with a good deal of public sympathy on his side by indiscreet references to his partisan activities by two European journalists. Another European journalist, employed on a well-known European newspaper in the North of India, who was subsequently dismissed from his employment after he had saddled his proprietors with heavy charges for compensation in a libel case, and had himself been prosecuted for contempt of court, seized on this circumstance to make the entirely unfounded allegation that Government officials had instigated these newspaper attacks on the President. This enabled the leader of the Opposition to call Mr. Patel's attention to the matter and bring it up in the Assembly. The Opposition, of course, treated all this as a Heaven-sent chance of embarrassing the Government, or rather, it would be more accurate to say that one part of the Opposition used the incident to embarrass the Government. For, by this time there was a good deal of hostility to Mr. Patel among the different parties in the House, and the more moderate members had been antagonised by his partisanship. The Government was not without its advisers, who recommended it to move a vote of no confidence in the Chair. This action, however, was impossible at that time, because the work of the European journalist had been skilfully done, and, as was only natural in the state of public opinion in India, his inventions were widely believed and the President was, by very large numbers of his countrymen, believed to be an ill-treated and much maligned man. At any rate, Lord Irwin decided that the occasion would not support any

such heroic measure, and in the end the affair was settled for the time being by the Home Member to the Government of India officially rebutting the charge and formally reaffirming the confidence of the Government of India in Mr. V. J. Patel. The effect of this incident on public opinion in India was out of all proportion to its importance, and shows how utterly strained and unreal the atmosphere of Indian politics then was. The falsehood of the charge against the Government officials was amply proved by the too facile journalist's inability to produce a shadow of proof of his allegation when requested to do so both by Mr. Patel and by the Home Member to the Government of India, the latter promising that he would take suitable action against any official who could be shown to have offended in the manner described. Nevertheless, the story was believed, and the Indian press resounded with the 'triumph' of Mr. Patel and the humiliation of the Government of India. It is no exaggeration to say that this incident, which should have been a petty one and should have ended with Sir James Crerar's first disclaimer of the complicity of Government officials in the attack on the President, which he made immediately after the matter was raised in the Assembly, proved to be quite one of the most important incidents of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty. For the breach between Mr. Patel and the official benches in the Assembly was never repaired. Mr. Patel, who had studied Parliamentary precedents diligently, had visible proof of the strength of his position as a result of this incident, and from that moment onwards his relations with Sir James Crerar, the leader of the Government, were those of open and

undisguised hostility The Home Member to the Government of India is a busy man, whereas the President of the Legislative Assembly is not Mr Patel, assisted by some of the Opposition, was able to devote much time to laying traps for the Government, and particularly for the Home Member as the leading representative for the Government, and the work of the Assembly henceforward was to proceed in a series of crises engineered either by members of the Opposition, with Mr Patel as a willing instrument, or by Mr Patel himself, backed up by his Congress colleagues on the Opposition benches Unfortunately, the state of opinion in the Assembly, of which a majority was hostile to the Government in this matter, not to mention broad political considerations, made it necessary to abstain from taking the ordinary constitutional steps to remove Mr Patel from the Chair, and Lord Irwin had to be drawn in from time to time to act as *deus ex machina* in these crises, with the result that certain of the Government officials, unable to understand the deeper implications of the situation, resented what they termed his favouritism of Mr Patel and his unfairness to his own Home Member The truth is that as the quarrel developed, Mr Patel became to the whole Left Wing of Indian political opinion, and to a good deal of the Centre, a sort of oriflamme which was proudly waved as a visible symbol of the manly independence of the first Indian President of the Indian Legislative Assembly Thus, during the very delicate negotiations which were to be undertaken between Lord Irwin and the leaders of the non co-operating or boycotting elements from the beginning of 1929 onwards, the removal of Mr Patel from the



Chair of the Legislative Assembly would have been a most violent blow to the influence of Lord Irwin with important sections of Indian political opinion, and would have been regarded by these as proof positive of the Government of India's and the British Government's alleged insincerity and fixed determination to crush any manifestation of independence of character or action on the part of the Indian people, wherever or by whom displayed. But, in any case, the Government could not have carried a motion against Mr. Patel, and the Viceroy had no power to nominate a president over the head of the Assembly.

The amount of attention devoted to this incident may seem disproportionate, but it is not so in reality, for it shows, in a way which anybody can understand, how explosive the political situation in India is and how any spark can fire it. Also, it shows how different are the standards and conditions of Parliamentary life in this country from those in India. Time after time, after some rebuff had been inflicted on the Government by Mr. Patel, members of the Opposition would discuss it as a good joke with members of the Government. It never occurred to them that what was happening was a grave injury to themselves and to their own Parliamentary future. Under the first President of the Legislative Assembly, Sir Frederick Whyte, the tone of the Assembly had been raised very high, and the dignity of its proceedings, and of the manner in which it conducted its business, could hardly have been exceeded anywhere. The members were proud of themselves and of the body to which they belonged. But Mr. Patel altered all that, lowering the conduct of business and the tone of public

life, and teaching lessons which responsible Indian Ministers of the future will have much cause to regret. It is no exaggeration to say that the Legislative Assembly, as set up by the 1919 Reforms, could not have survived many more months of Mr. Patel's presidentship, and his subsequent resignation was a boon to the country.

A journey through the events and developments which crowd thick and fast on us now carries us swiftly into a region of dark skies and sombre vistas. Political murder and revolutionary crime show their Medusa masks again. In December, a murder as brutal and dastardly as ever defaced the annals of Indian crime was perpetrated in Lahore when Mr. Saunders, a young, brilliant and gallant police officer of the best public schoolboy type, who had already, in his short service of about three years, given signs of marked promise, was shot dead as he was leaving his office, by two Indian youths, one of whom was afterwards arrested in connection with the bomb-throwing in the Legislative Assembly, and, being found guilty of Mr. Saunders's murder, was hanged. The prolonged and violent strikes fomented for political purposes, train-wreckings, arsons, murders, and other crimes of all sorts marked the rerudescence of revolutionary crime in India and the reappearance of the furtive gunman, whilst the exploitation of inexperienced youth for political agitation by older men bodes ill for the future. Amidst this devil's dance of extremist unrest and political crime, organised politics in India move uncertainly towards disruption and mere futility. Only one or two political sections or parties know the goal towards which they want to move and keep themselves

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the suggestion was made it was eagerly acclaimed, and Congressmen unanimously decided to put it into effect, if only Mr. Gandhi was willing. He had suffered heavy defeats in the past from Pandit Motilal Nehru and other Congressmen, and he had no illusions as to his complete lack of influence with any of the other minority communities. But when once a man has heard politics calling he tends to heed naught else, and so, a little reluctantly, he came forth.

The scene shifts now to Calcutta, where the All-India National Congress, and the All-Parties Conference, and the All-India Youth League, and the All-India Muslim League, among other bodies, were about to hold their annual sessions. At the Congress Session the main proceedings turned on the adoption of the Nehru Report by the Government of India and the attitude of members of Congress towards the question of independence versus dominion status. This was the thing for which Mr. Gandhi had been brought to Calcutta, and the main resolution put before the Session for its adoption was drafted by him. It is worth quoting in full in order to show the length to which a peacemaker had to go and the ambiguities in which he had to deal to get anything like even formal unity of action from the Congress delegates. The resolution reads as follows:

'This Congress, having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems, and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and, whilst adhering to the

clear of internal dissensions on the one hand, and descent into the chaos and anarchy of extremism on the other. But the Moslems, the Sikhs, the Europeans and the Anglo-Indians, and even the Depressed Classes—a striking, and, in the true sense of the words, an epoch-making portent, this—were all the time closing their ranks in preparation for whatever emergency might beset them. After the Lucknow meeting, at which the Nehru Report was discussed, the All-India National Congress began to suffer another of those processes of disruption with which it was by now becoming familiar. The older men disliked the talk of independence and feared it, for they saw that it was mostly in the mouths of the young men, who, as they gained experience, would talk in a different strain, but who might, in the process of gaining experience, cause immense harm to their country. The crown of the Congress Party was in dispute between Pandit Motilal Nehru and the leader of the Madras Congressmen, Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar, who talked of independence because Pandit Motilal Nehru talked of dominion status within the British Empire, and, in the fight for the leadership, they could hardly use the same weapon. As the Annual Session of Congress drew near with the end of the year, staunch Congressmen feared that in their struggles these two giants of the party would rend its fabric beyond repair. The stage was all set for the battle when—nobody quite knew how or on whose initiative—the Heaven-sent solution occurred. Why not call out from his retreat the one leader of indisputable first rank who had not been mixed up in any of the internecine feuds of the last few years—Mr. Gandhi? From the moment that

resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress, adopts the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, especially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country, provided, however, that the Congress shall not be bound by the Constitution if it is not accepted on or before 31st December 1930, and provided, further, that in the event of non acceptance by the British Parliament of the Constitution by that date, the Congress will revive non violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and every other aid to the Government

'The President is hereby authorised to send the text of this resolution, together with a copy of the said Report, to His Excellency the Viceroy for such action as he may be pleased to take

'Nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the propaganda for familiarising people with the goal of independence in so far as it does not conflict with the prosecution of the campaign for the adoption of the said Report'

There was a good deal of brave sword and buckler work between Mr Srinivasa Iyengar and his supporters and their rivals of the Nehru Party, but this was for the delectation of the crowd who expected some sort of a show for their money. The real work of the Session went on behind the scenes, where the two rivals and their leading lieutenants, under the soothing influence of Mr Gandhi's presence and words, decided that they would just keep on their own side of the imaginary line which divided Pandit Motilal Nehru's dominion status from Mr Srinivasa Iyengar's independence. But all this

(3) All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies should be reconstituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province without reducing the majority of any province to a minority or even equality

(4) In the Central Legislature Muslim representation should not be less than one-third

(5) The representation of communal groups should continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present, provided that it should be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorates

(6) Any territorial redistribution that might at any time be necessary should not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal, and North-West Frontier Province

(7) Full religious liberty, that is, liberty of belief, worship, observances, propaganda, association, and education should be guaranteed to all communities

(8) No Bill or resolution, or any part thereof, should be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three-fourths of the members of any community in that particular body oppose such a Bill or resolution or part thereof on the ground that it would be injurious to the interests of that community or, in the alternative, such other method is devised as may be found feasible and practicable to deal with such cases

(9) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency

(10) Reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces

(11) Provision should be made in the Constitution giving the Muslim an adequate share along with other Indians in all the Services of the State and in self-governing bodies, having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.

(12) The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim religion, culture and personal law, and the promotion of Muslim education, language, religion, personal laws, Muslim charitable institutions, and for their due share in grants-in-aid given by the State and by self-governing bodies.

(13) No Cabinet, either central or provincial, should be formed without there being a proportion of Muslim Ministers of at least one-third.

(14) No change to be made in the Constitution by the Central Legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation.

(15) That in the present circumstances the representation of Musulmans in the different legislatures of the country and of the other elected bodies through separate electorates is inevitable, and, further, Government being pledged not to deprive the Musulmans of this right, it cannot be taken away without their consent, and so long as the Musulmans are not satisfied that their rights and interests are safeguarded in the manner specified above (or herein) they would in no way consent to the establishment of joint electorates with or without conditions.

*Note.* — The question of excess representation of Musulmans over and above their population in the provinces where they are in the minority to be considered hereafter.



But the Hindu leaders at the Convention would have none of them, and, after a stormy meeting during which Mr Jinnah, deeply moved by the sense of responsibility of the occasion, made an impassioned appeal for understanding and statesmanship, the Moslems left the meeting, and the All-Parties Conference adjourned, *sine die*—it is to be hoped not for ever. Here is the danger of non-co operation nakedly revealed. Had this vital question of Hindu-Moslem relations come up before the All-India Legislature, a truly All-India body, with Congressmen and their leaders, as well as others, sitting there, can anybody doubt that it would have been long and anxiously and responsibly debated? The members of the Legislature would have known that nothing less than the peace and unity of India were under discussion, and their actions would have corresponded to their knowledge.

Mr Jinnah's defeat made it impossible for the All-India Muslim League to hold its proposed Session, for, as it turned out, none of the co-operating sections of Moslems had come to Calcutta, and, going as he did, empty-handed, from the All-Parties Convention, he had no material with which to go before the League. So, it also adjourned, but not *sine die*. It adjourned for only a few days, because most of its members, on 1st January 1929, found themselves in Delhi with representatives of every other section of Moslem opinion throughout India gathered under the presidency of the Aga Khan, with what results we shall see shortly.

The meeting of the All-India Youth Congress, held a few days after the Session of the All-India National Congress, deserves notice because it brought into

tangible and visible form the effects of the vicious propaganda which had been carried on among the rising generation of India with increasing energy for some months past. It goes without saying that the meeting adopted unanimously a resolution declaring India's goal to be complete independence, and called upon the youths of India to attain it by all possible means. In the last words are the warrant and authority for the murders and train-wreckings and other revolutionary outrages to which instigation addressed to such inflammable material directly leads. By way of contrast to this resolution of the extreme wing of the most extreme section of Indian political activity—if it can be dignified by the word 'political'—may be placed the proceedings of the All-India Liberal Federation meeting in Allahabad about the same time. Though the moderate men represented at the meeting were not prepared to drop the boycott of the Commission, they were equally not prepared to follow Mr. Gandhi in his proposed new movement for civil disobedience, and they said so unambiguously and with determination. But, unfortunately, it is the Congress that carries the greater numbers with it, and their noisy proceedings reverberated throughout the country. They made far more noise than the doings of the Moslems in these last days of 1928, but the Moslems did not want to make any noise. They were preparing for business.

From the beginning of 1929 onwards, it is not necessary, in following the movement of events in India, to go far beyond the doings of Lord Irwin himself. For the swift rush of events seem to eddy around him. He came quite definitely and un-

mistakably to represent the views of all the stable, moderate, self possessed elements in the country, no matter to what race or community they belonged. Around Mr Gandhi surged the activities of the Congress Party. Lord Irwin held up before India the ideal of ordered progress through free and equal negotiation with the British Government. Mr Gandhi held up—what? Nobody could say, least of all himself. He has never had any constructive policy to which to call his followers, and his own high ideals have always proved too fragile and evanescent for the hurly-burly of workaday politics and the world of affairs. From the beginning of 1929 onwards, as far as the vocal, effective elements in Indian public life are concerned, everything has stood still except the all-absorbing political kaleidoscope. And the events which form that colourful, jumbled world resolve themselves ultimately into the clash of two vivid personalities who, with much in common, including their views as to the ultimate outcome of India's nationalist ambitions—for, in the last analysis, Mr Gandhi's independence is nothing more than dominion status as we understand it to day—nevertheless sought to lead India along paths which lay diametrically opposite to each other. From the beginning of 1929 until those last fateful months of Lord Irwin's viceroyalty in 1931, the searchlight of world attention shone with continually increasing brightness and steadiness on these two figures who resolve the dark, abstruse symbols of the Indian equation into terms which a world, ignorant of India's conditions and problems, can understand, at least to some extent.

## CHAPTER X

1929

A FATEFUL—it may be a decisive—year opened for India on 1st January 1929. That day His Highness the Aga Khan presided over the most representative gathering of Moslems which has ever assembled during the rule of the British in India. The work done at that day's gathering was of vast import to India, and its full results will not be worked out or seen for years to come. On 31st December 1929, the All-India National Congress meeting in Lahore, with Mr. Gandhi present and playing a decisive part in its proceedings, declared that the goal of India's political progress was complete independence, thus repeating the declaration of the Madras Congress of 1927, to which Lord Birkenhead, who was then Secretary of State for India, had wisely decided not to give any meretricious importance by attacking it. Between these two events came Lord Irwin's now historic announcement of 31st October, which gave a new vision to the people of India and caused something like a political crisis in England, focusing attention here on the fundamentals of India's relations with Great Britain and forcing them into the forefront of English politics, from which even the devastating events at home and abroad of the past three years have not been able to dislodge them. But these are only the chief events, the towering peaks of a landscape which is full

of life and interest. During this year there was going on between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi a conflict of mind and influence and policies for the loyalties of India. It was Lord Irwin who won, and the proofs of his victory are the Round Table Conference, the hopes and ideals with which Indians of all classes and creeds and communities assembled, and the conception of a federation of all India for the first time in the thousands of years of her history. 1930 and 1931 may have more of those incidents to show which fill the columns of newspapers and bring much increment to the correspondents in India of foreign newspapers; but, for good or evil, the events of the year 1929 set the conditions in which politics and politicians in India now move, and will move in future.

After His Highness the Aga Khan's meeting on 1st January, there could no longer be any doubt about the essential unity of the Moslem community or about the far-reaching character of Moslem political objectives and the great magnitude of the problem they present. It must be realised that by this time feeling was running high in India, and politics, in all its varied manifestations of nationalist, communal, and racial ideals and antagonisms and claims and counter-claims, filled the newspapers and public discussions to the virtual exclusion of everything else. All other topics were related to this and judged accordingly. Problems of economics, public finance, and all the multifarious legal and social problems which crowd on the Government of India, were turned into mere incidents or phases of the great political hurly-burly. Politics and always politics is the keynote of Indian affairs from the beginning of 1929 onwards, in spite of the fact that India has suffered in

the great depression almost as much as any other country and that her foremost need is for a comprehensively planned policy of economic reconstruction, and balanced industrial and agricultural development. But it is certain now that this and other things will have to wait until a reasonably stable position of political equilibrium has been reached.

Both friends and enemies of constitutional change in India have repeatedly affirmed that there is no reality in Indian politics. By politics, of course, they mean the organised politics of the Central and Provincial Legislatures, and it is obvious that there is a certain amount of truth in what they say, and both sides are right in about an equal degree, although the reasons they allege for their opinion are diametrically opposed to each other. But, however this may be with regard to the manoeuvres inside the various Indian legislatures, enough has been said in the preceding chapters to show that the substance of Indian politics is entirely real. And in what we might call the 'communal' side of Indian politics we have reality with a vengeance. In Chapter vi. the deeper bases of the Hindu-Moslem position in India were discussed, and we saw that the mere *odium theologicum* is by no means the only, or, even, the strongest, spring of Hindu-Moslem antagonism. Further, in the events attending the publication and the subsequent fate of the Nehru Report we have seen events and developments which themselves are the results of the working of strong and natural forces and have driven the two communities farther and farther apart, and have shown at last that their differences are unmistakably political in their ultimate character. The leaders of neither community have

wished for such a development. Indeed, most of them have tried to prevent it, but there seems to be some malign fate attending Hindu-Moslem unity conferences, for every one that has been held so far has had no other result than to drive the two communities still farther apart. The proceedings of the great Moslem gathering in Delhi on 1st January 1929 call for study, because at it practically the whole of Moslem India spoke with one voice for the first time since it ceased to be represented by one man in the person of the Moghul Emperor in Delhi. Recent divisions between Moslem leaders and Moslem sections of thought have been deep and bitter. Some of the differences were personal, others rose out of matters of principle connected with the claims and the future of the Moslem community in India, and with the wider question of the relations between India and the British Empire. But these were all bridged over now, and the gathering at Delhi on the first day of 1929 proceeded to work which will make history for years to come. The list of men present makes it idle for anyone to attempt to deny the representative character of the gathering, and the scope of the resolution which was unanimously accepted, and all that had gone before, or that has happened since, show that it will be dangerous to attempt to decry its importance. Even the old orthodox religious leaders who had hitherto kept aloof from politics attended—striking proof of the completeness of Moslem unity and the depth to which the feelings of the community were stirred. The essence of the proceedings is found in the main resolution, which was unanimously adopted. Comparing it with Mr Jinnah's fifteen points we see that the Moslem demand

for provincial autonomy, of a particularly complete and independent kind, is carried further by adding to it the specific condition that the Central Government shall have control only of such matters of common interest as may be specifically entrusted to it by the Constitution. Mr Jinnah's fifth point allowed any community to abandon its separate communal electorate at any time, but the resolution at the Aga Khan's meeting said that until Moslems were satisfied with the constitutional safeguards provided for them they would never consent to give up their separate electorate with or without conditions. The remaining parts of the resolution were much the same as Mr Jinnah's, but it ends by saying that 'this Conference emphatically declares that no Constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be acceptable to Indian Muslims unless it conforms with the principles embodied in this resolution.' There is far more here than the mere dotting of i's and the crossing of t's in Mr Jinnah's resolution. The kind of provincial autonomy which the Moslems demand is now much more rigidly defined, and the note of possible compromise in regard to certain of the Moslem claims, which we find in Mr Jinnah's manifesto, is absent from this one. Taken in conjunction with the circumstances and the atmosphere of the great Moslem rally at Delhi on 1st January, this hardening of sentiment and sharper definition of aim is very noticeable.

The time has come to examine these claims frankly and fearlessly. It is very unlikely that any but a very few of the Moslem leaders saw their full implications in 1929, but they have become clearer and clearer since then, and the discussions and proceedings at the two



sessions of the Round Table Conference in 1930 and 1931 have brought them well within the comprehension of all who want to understand the fundamental realities of the Indian situation. It is a favourite rhetorical device of anti-Government orators in India, when gravelled for lack of valid arguments, to accuse the British of being the instigators of Hindu-Moslem discord. What has been said already puts this particular allegation quite out of court, for the forces at work in this matter can no more be subordinated to the uses of political intrigue than a flash of lightning can be made into a plaything for a child. We have seen how the undoubted sincerity and friendliness of Lord Irwin's intervention in Hindu Moslem affairs was never mistaken for anything but what it was, namely, a genuine endeavour to bring the prestige and authority of his great office to help in solving one of the most difficult and dangerous problems which India has got to face. The present discussion will, it is earnestly to be hoped, be taken as another expression of the deep anxiety which all Englishmen who have had to take part in or study Indian politics feel as they watch the swift, relentless approach of the communities to positions separated by a gulf so wide and deep that no reunion will ever be possible. For what is happening is nothing less than this. The creation of a strong, united India, including the whole of British India and the Indian States and the borderland in the north-west, whose inclusion in India is one of the first and most fundamental conditions of her nationhood, is, day by day, being made impossible, and in its place it seems that there may be brought into being a powerful Muhammadan state in the north and north-

west, with its eyes definitely turned away from India, towards the rest of the Moslem world of which it forms the fringe, whilst away to the south and east there will be—what? A Hindu India, homogeneous and united? Perhaps! Or a vast area divided between warring princes and the fighting races of old Hindustan as it has been in the past, and may easily be so again in the future? Very likely! This is the prospect which faces India, and no Englishman who knows and loves her should shrink from placing that grim prospect before her people. The Delhi resolution postulates quite definitely a federal form of constitution for British India, with full autonomous powers for the provinces. The wider and more truly national ideal of a federation of All-India was not to appear over the horizon of practical politics until the Round Table Conference. Further, the provinces are to have the residuary powers of government, which means that any new powers found necessary in the future owing to scientific, social, economic and other developments shall be vested in the provinces, which would thus occupy the same position with regard to the Central Government of India as the American States occupy *vis-a-vis* the Federal Government of the United States. The resolution proposes that Sind, with its predominant Moslem population, shall be detached from the Bombay Presidency and made into a full province like the Punjab or any others, as, also, should the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, where the Moslem element in the population is quite overwhelming. It will be remembered that both Bengal and the Punjab have Moslem majorities, and, with the Moslems adhering to their separate electorates and representa-

tion on a population basis—later still to be altered into a demand for a guarantee of their majorities in Bengal and the Punjab in the fundamental document of the Constitution—their claims are far-reaching. A glance at a map will show how the fulfilment of certain parts of the resolution would bring into being a powerful *bloc* of Moslem provinces across the whole north and north-west of India with only one gap anywhere between them, namely, between Delhi and Bengal. But between Delhi and Bengal is a corridor which is largely Moslem. Through Allahabad, Agra and Patna a traveller journeys through a country which has a powerful and virile Moslem element still retaining lively traditions of the days when the great cities mentioned were centres of Moslem rule. Then, let the reader look away across the North-Western Frontier to the kingdom of Afghanistan, which is even now the scene of modernising movements, through Persia, which is in the same condition, and so on to the heart of the Moslem world in Turkey. The Indian Moslems are loyal and patriotic Indians; nevertheless, some of them dream of the revival of the glory of Islam with Moslem India playing a prominent part, and they do not forget, for memories are long and traditions have a perennial youth in the East, that it was from Moslem hands that the British took over the overlordship of India. From time to time, and more frequently as time goes on, separatist views are expressed by Moslem spokesmen and Moslem newspapers, and it is certain now that Moslems cannot be coerced into accepting any settlement which they believe will be detrimental to their future. This is not the same thing as saying that the Moslems will stick to the last comma

of the demands which they have made up to the present, but it does mean that there are long and difficult negotiations ahead before a pact, satisfactory both to them and the Hindus, can be reached. And, in the meantime, the situation is growing more and more difficult, and estrangement is widening. In the Indian States, as the example of Kashmir shows, the Hindu-Moslem problem is capable of strange and dangerous manifestations, which produce immediate and violent reactions in British India. These, again, in their turn, travel back to produce new events and new developments. Imagine the example of Kashmir applied to a few other states in India, where analogous conditions prevail, and the imminence of formidable intercommunal troubles, fundamental in kind and all-embracing in scope, is seen clearly enough. All these things must be borne in mind by those who want to understand the more important realities of the Indian situation, and, in any case, Hindu and Moslem leaders should know clearly towards what grim horizon the swift flight of events is hurrying them. For, with realisation will undoubtedly come revulsion of feeling and therewith hope for the future.

For the moment, though, the wind was blowing still harder from another quarter. With the opening of the winter session of the Legislature in January the Government of India came to grips with the now dangerous menace of subterranean, subversive activities from quarters sympathetic towards Communism or from the frankly terrorist and revolutionary organisations which were once more making their existence known. For months past the Home Department had been preparing material for a conspiracy case against

a number of individuals whom the Government alleged to be engaged in treasonable activities with the object of overthrowing the system of government established by law in India. This was their offensive against the danger which they apprehended from this quarter, and their defensive took the form of pressing on with the Public Safety Bill. The Opposition, led and controlled by the Congress Party in the Assembly, made it known that they would fight the Government in this matter to the very last. Here were certainly the seeds of conflict—as it turned out, of very grave conflict indeed—and another Bill, which the Assembly took into consideration this session, added fuel to the fire which was already burning briskly. This was the Trade Disputes Bill, which, among other things, penalised lightning strikes in public utility services, and also declared illegal all those strikes and lock outs which had bases other than economic and were meant to coerce the Government either by direct action against it or by inflicting hardship on the general population. This Bill also was made a first-class *casus belli* by the Opposition, and the two together led to the bitterest passages of arms and most serious estrangement between the Government and the Opposition which had hitherto been known. The Indian press, from which, of course, the vast majority of Indians get their information and views on politics, featured every extreme and inflammatory speech which was made in the House, and quickly the attention of literate India was centred in the doings in the Legislative Assembly. The unhappy precedent of the Rowlatt Act, which was one of the immediate causes of the savage outbreak in the Punjab in 1919, was freely quoted, and, indeed, it

is likely that the excitement caused by the Public Safety Bill and the suspicions and passions engendered were little, if not less, than those to which the Rowlatt Act gave rise. The President of the Assembly was quite clearly in sympathy with the Opposition and gave them full scope to use delaying tactics. After the annual Finance Bill was out of the way, Government and Opposition found themselves locked in an ever-tightening grip. The Assembly was prolonged far beyond its usual term into the blazing heat of April in Delhi. The tension between the Chair and the leaders of the official benches grew worse. The Government and the Assembly lived in a continuous state of crisis, and, for reasons which we have already seen, the whole burden of Government policy and action at this dangerous juncture rested on Lord Irwin himself. Nothing would have pleased the Opposition leaders more than to have been able simply to walk out of the Assembly and leave the Government and their supporters to themselves. It is vitally necessary that the reader should understand the potentialities of a real disaster which existed in this situation. Had the whole Opposition, not only the Congress Party but the others, walked out of the Assembly together with the President, the Assembly would never again have functioned. The Opposition would not have come back, and it is idle to say that the Government could have carried on with the mutilated Assembly which would have been left. Moreover, such a move would have precipitated the country into the most violent unrest which it had ever known. All the elements of tumult and upheaval would have rushed together. The state of affairs was such that general strikes on

railways and in other public utility services could have been declared, some of the great cities were seething with industrial and inter communal troubles, and there were great areas where the slow, long suffering peasantry could have been stampeded. From this veritable disaster India was saved largely by the personal prestige and exertions of Lord Irwin. Mr Patel became a frequent visitor at Viceregal Lodge, and officials going for their customary interview or to attend the Council meeting would see his khaddar clad figure walking along a corridor, or, seated in his car, being driven New Delhi wards after an interview in which he had been allowed to retail his troubles, and in return had received counsel and an obviously understanding hearing of his difficulties and his side of the case. There was, of course, no question of Lord Irwin's siding with the President against his own officers. On the contrary, he was the head and front of the resistance to Mr Patel's pretensions. In spite of this, however, the greatest respect for Lord Irwin personally continued to be felt by the President, a most valuable political factor this, for Mr Patel was by this time acting almost as an unofficial leader of the Congress Party, and undoubtedly his influence was one of the strong factors which kept the Congress Party inside the Assembly. But other important members of the Congress Party were in personal touch with Lord Irwin, whilst the leaders of the other parties had regular access to him. His callers' list grew daily of more portentous length as the winter session rolled on and steadily Lord Irwin was sensing the political situation in preparation for the big projected undertaking of the summer and autumn, which was no less

than the detaching from boycott and bringing back to co-operation the whole of political India except part—a greater part, it is true, but nevertheless only one part—of the Congress Party. Every possible shade and variety of opinion was poured out to Lord Irwin and, whatever other result his interviews may have had at the time, one result was achieved uniformly, and that was that his interviewers all came under the influence of his personality and understood that for Lord Irwin the second of the dual capacities of the Viceroy was in no way inferior to the first. At the opening of the session on 28th January Lord Irwin once again addressed the Legislature, discussing current topics of importance and touching only briefly this time on the deeper political issues, since he had spoken at length on them before. He found time, however, for a weighty reaffirmation of the declaration of 1917, and also for a refreshingly personal discussion of the functions of a Viceroy, during which he said:

‘Whoever holds the position of Viceroy and Governor-General of India is bound through his office and conscience by a double duty. He is under the plain obligation of seeing that the King’s Government in India is carried on, with due respect for the law, and in this sphere he may at any time be confronted with issues that are more far-reaching than ordinary political controversy, and that are indeed fundamental to all society. Respect for law is an attribute of civilisation painfully and hardly won, and a society which lacks it carries within itself the seeds of its own dissolution. Those, therefore, who can guide public opinion in this country are doing no service to India’



if they accustom her to think lightly of disobedience to constituted authority, whatever the title by which such disobedience may be described.

‘But in another and not less important capacity the Viceroy and Governor-General stands as intermediary between India and Great Britain, and as such will constantly endeavour to interpret as faithfully as he may the hopes, the feelings, the desires of the Indian people to those who may from time to time compose His Majesty’s Government in Great Britain, and, if I may quote words which are used in connection with another office in the British Constitution, “to beg His Majesty’s Government ever to place the most favourable construction upon all their proceedings.”’

It was to be a thing of priceless value to India and to Britain in the dark and trying months ahead, but India’s leaders understood what importance Lord Irwin attached to the ‘Indian’ side of his office, and knew that he tried sincerely to act up to his words, and, strange as it may seem to those who were not in close touch with Indian politics at that time, came to regard him as, in a way, their leader as well as the representative of His Majesty’s Government and the leader of the official forces in the country.

Nevertheless, during the last days of March and the early days of April the drab tumult in the Legislative Assembly went on, with passions on both sides rising with the mercury in the thermometer. Mr. Patel, partly goaded on by the Congress Party, and partly fired with ambition with what he had seen in the House of Commons during his visit to England in the previous summer, began to conceive a wide and utterly

unwarranted view of his powers as President of the Legislative Assembly. He began to try to approximate his position to the historic office of Speaker of the House of Commons, and to copy some of the Constitution-making acts of famous speakers in the old days when Parliamentary proceedings and democratic institutions in England were in process of being fashioned between the anvil of Parliamentary privilege and the hammer of royal prerogative. It is not easy to see how the Government could in the end have avoided challenging his pretensions, in spite of Lord Irwin's incessant and hitherto miraculously successful efforts to keep the peace, had it not been for an occurrence which sent a thrill through the world. This was the bombing of the Government benches in the Assembly by one of the murderers of Mr. Saunders on 8th April. From a public gallery above and behind the official benches two bombs were thrown into the official benches, where they exploded with shattering force. The first bomb pitched in a gangway by the side of the bench occupied by Sir George Schuster. Fortunately, the massive side of his bench protected him, otherwise he must have been killed. As it was, he was slightly wounded in the arm. The second bomb pitched underneath a bench occupied by Government and nominated members. Fortunately, there was a short interval between the two explosions and the bench had been almost cleared. But an old Parsee member, Sir Bomanji Dalal, was hurt and the bench itself was reduced to splintered ruins. The strength of the bombs can be gauged from the fact that the lofty dome above the Chamber was penetrated by fragments. Fortunately, the bomb coverings were not

reticulated, and the bombs burst in massy fragments which embedded themselves in the ceiling or the floor or the sides of benches instead of flying among the packed ranks of members, where they must have taken murderous toll of life. The would-be murderer, after throwing the bombs, fired two or three shots from an automatic pistol, until the police, rushing hastily from the Lobbies, seized and secured him. During the pistol firing, an official in the Government box by the side of the Government benches was wounded. By a coincidence, Sir John Simon was sitting in the President's gallery, which is exactly opposite to the official benches, and witnessed the whole scene. This tremendous event shocked and startled the Assembly and the whole country. It was indeed a glimpse into the foul underworld of terrorist and revolutionary activity in India, and for a time even the most extreme politicians recoiled in horror from the fact. But nothing could shake the determination of the Congress Party to continue to oppose the Public Safety Bill, and, as far as that was concerned, the deadlock continued. Mr. Patel carried his quarrel with the Government a big step further when, on 11th April, he actually ruled the Public Safety Bill out of order, claiming that the implied authority of his office, and the analogy between it and the office of Speaker of the House of Commons empowered him to do so. But both the deadlock and the state of tension between the Chair and the Government benches were brought to an end by decisive action from Lord Irwin. He suspended the proceedings in respect of the Bill in the Legislature, and accomplished its object by means of an Ordinance, with all the force of law, which he was empowered

under the Constitution to issue. A day or two later, he called both the Houses of the Legislature together and addressed them in person. Lord Irwin's speeches to the Legislature or to other public or semi-public bodies show that he has never hesitated to speak out his mind when necessary, even though by so doing he may have run the risk of offending susceptibilities. On the present occasion, therefore, whilst associating himself specifically with the resentment felt by all the members of both Houses at the recent outrage in the Legislative Assembly, he did not hesitate to show how dangerous was the course of conduct practised by some Indian spokesmen who paid lip service to the cause of law and order and non-violence whilst losing no opportunity of vilifying those whose duty it was to maintain peace and order in the country.

'I do not doubt,' he said, 'that all right-thinking persons, with such an object-lesson fresh in their memory, will be of one mind and speak with one voice in reprobation of such conduct. But if there be reprobation, let it be unqualified. To condemn a crime in one breath, and in the next to seek excuse for it by laying blame on those against whom it is directed, is no true condemnation.'

He left his audience under no delusion as to the will or ability of his Government to discharge its duty to protect law-abiding citizens. But the most important part of his speech was undoubtedly that in which he gave his answer to Mr. Patel's assumption of authority which did not belong to him.

'The second reason,' he said, 'for which I have required your attendance this morning was to acquaint Honourable Members with the decisions reached by my Government in view of the situation created by the ruling given yesterday by the President of the Legislative Assembly. The result of that ruling, which it is not my purpose here to discuss, is twofold. In the first place it propounds an interpretation of the rules, which I am satisfied is not in conformity with their original intention.

'In the second place, the practical effect of the President's ruling as it stands is to debar Government from asking the Legislature to give it the additional powers of which it conceives itself to stand in need, and to make it impossible for either Chamber of the Legislature to record any decision upon Government's proposals, or to form its own judgment upon the question whether or not it could usefully conduct its debates on these proposals within the rules of order.

'I desire to state clearly the position of myself and my Government on both these issues. Entertaining as it does no doubt as to the intention of the rules in question, my Government is none the less constrained to recognise that the only appropriate person to interpret within either House of the Legislature the rules under which it works is the President of the House himself. If, therefore, the interpretation of the rules by the President of either House gives rise as now to a situation in which Government for grave reasons is unable to acquiesce, the only effective remedy is that early measures should be taken to secure by due authority such amendment of the rules as may be

necessary to prevent any recurrence in future of a similar interruption in the normal legislative procedure. That course we propose to follow without delay, and, in order that there may be no misunderstanding, I will add that the broad purpose of the amendment in the rules which we propose to seek will be to secure that the progress of legislation, which it is within the power of the Indian Legislature to pass, shall not be prevented by the President of either House, except in virtue of express powers to do so conferred upon him by the Rules and Standing Orders.'

The quotation is a long one, but its importance will be at once perceived in the light of what has been said in preceding chapters. In the first place, it is a clear and unequivocal answer to those people who have accused Lord Irwin of weakness or political ineptitude in dealing with Mr. Patel. Throughout the long-drawn quarrels between the latter and the Government spokesmen in the Legislative Assembly, such charges were made and repeated both in England and in India. The ring of authority and finality in the above extract is unmistakable, and, in fact, it put an end once and for all to the claims of inherent authority in the Chair which Mr. Patel put forward. But more than this, Lord Irwin knew that in taking the action outlined in his speech, both in regard to the Chair and to the Ordinance already referred to, the forthcoming issue of which he announced, he was jeopardising at the outset the policy whose foundations he had already laid with such patience and labour. There were many people, including members of his own party, who had expected Mr. Patel to resign in the event of any such

development as this and to lead an agitation in the country. It was known that he cherished the ambition to become President of the All-India National Congress and had he resigned on this issue the Congress Party and certain of their allies could have produced exactly the same results as those which were described above as certain to flow from his dismissal, could the Government have ensured this, or his voluntary resignation in consequence of his dispute with the leaders of the Government Party in the Assembly. That Mr Patel did not resign is a tribute not only to Lord Irwin's influence and the correctness of his action in this matter, but to Mr Patel himself who, at this time, was unquestionably convinced that he could serve his country better by helping to forward Lord Irwin's ideas rather than by heading an opposition to him and his Government. On the morrow of Lord Irwin's address to the Legislature the session ended, and the members dispersed.

But many of them dispersed in a very different frame of mind from that in which they had assembled. Lord Irwin's labours of explanation and reasoning with his multitudinous interviewers, during which he was all the while feeling his way towards a position from which he could make a sweeping and effective attempt to bring to his side the whole of political India, except that part which was most deeply committed to automatic opposition or, even, to active and violent hostility, had not been in vain. And, as so often happens, good came out of evil, and all through India men of integrity, peace loving citizens, recoiled from the vista of murder and anarchy whose screens had been blown away by the bombs that morning in

Delhi. In its own way, the development of feeling which occurred in India was the same as that which showed itself at the General Election of 1931 in England. There was a great swing away from that which seemed to be dangerous, towards that which seemed to be safe, and as the summer wore on this became more and more evident. The Statutory Commission had left India, and boycott of its proceedings was already a thing of the past. And now, with the threads of Indian politics well in his hand, Lord Irwin was able fully to appreciate the change that had taken place. The Moslems, more and more solidly together with every month that passed, were being drawn by the strong orthodox element, which had never boycotted the Commission, into a position from which they were ready to drop boycott, assume friendly relations with the Government, and concentrate on the claims advanced at the Delhi meeting of 1st January, knowledge and some understanding of which had by now penetrated to the Moslem masses all over the country. The men of moderate persuasion, whether they called themselves Liberals or not, were everywhere unhappy in the unfamiliar wilderness of non-co-operation, and they too were looking for a way back. But, more than this, practically the whole of organised political opinion in India, except the Left Wing of the Left Wingers, namely, the Congress Party, were ready to accept any arrangement which would allow them to drop boycott and co-operate in the great forward movement which they wanted, and which they now knew that Lord Irwin and all that was best in British politics also wanted. This was the position in the summer of 1929 when Lord Irwin came to



England on a short leave which was to become a memorable event in the history of India

By this time, conditions in India were ripe for a forward move against boycott and non-co-operation, and Lord Irwin, acting on ascertained fact and personal knowledge, had decided to make the move. In certain quarters in India and in Britain loud and sustained demands were made for 'firm' action. The Government was urged, indeed, commanded, to proscribe Congress, to dismiss Mr. Patel, to strengthen the powers of the police and the military, in short, to enter on a thorough-going policy of counter-terrorism. Now, from what has been said above it is clear that such action as this would have immediately destroyed the fragile web of good feeling and growing co-operation in India, and the last state of the country would have been infinitely worse than the first. Already, Lord Irwin had clear in his mind the main elements of the policy by which he hoped to do away with terrorism, and revolution, and political crime and unrest, and all the other dangerous developments which were rearing their heads in all directions. This policy aimed at destroying the very conditions in which they flourish. The energy, the enthusiasm, the patriotism of Indians, and particularly of the young generation, which was being put to unworthy uses, he wanted to turn into worthy service. And the question which was better, the policy desired by his critics or the policy which he subsequently put into operation, has only got to be asked to find an immediate and final answer. Lord Irwin chose the better way because his choice was founded on knowledge which he applied according to the dictates of the prevailing conditions of India.

His close scrutiny of the situation, and his almost continuous interviews with representatives of the various sides of Indian opinion and feeling, went on until he left for England in June for a short holiday of four months. By this time the long life of the 1924 Conservative Government had come to an end, and for the second time, a minority Labour Government was in power. Every change of government in England is a thing of deep concern to the Indian people, naturally enough, since with the Government at home lies, according to the Constitution, the last word in their own affairs. There is not the least doubt that the advent of the Labour Government was welcomed by most of the political leaders in India, except the most extreme and the most conservative, an apparent paradox which, however, is simply explained. The extremists loudly professed to be indifferent to the character of the British Government, because they said that no British Government could possibly agree to their extreme demands, especially those put forward at the 1928 session of the All-Indian National Congress. From their point of view a Labour Government was just the same as a Conservative Government, and certain Congress newspapers recalled the 'Imperialism' displayed towards Egypt by the Labour Government during its last term of office, and, also, certain very frank words directed by Mr. MacDonald towards India herself, in which he made it clear that his Government was no more inclined to yield to threats of violence than any other. The Right Wing element in Indian politics, and particularly the more Conservative Moslems, on the other hand, undoubtedly viewed the advent of the Labour Government with some

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apprehension, for they feared that between its Left Wing and Congress in India there might be a *rapprochement*, with consequences acceptable to Congress and unacceptable to themselves. Politicians in India, therefore, looked with some eagerness for the announcement of the name of the new Secretary of State. On the whole, Mr Wedgwood Benn's appointment was received with satisfaction all round. His distinguished record in the War, his past connection with the Liberal Party, and his own personal characteristics convinced the Indian Conservatives that he was not likely to become a mere instrument of the Congress Party. The more extreme Congressmen still maintained their attitude of indifference to the personality of any British Government Minister, whether Secretary of State or any other, but the more moderate Congressmen, and particularly that very important part of Congress opinion represented by the Madras *Hindu*—the *Manchester Guardian* of India—welcomed Mr Benn because they saw in him a man who would not subordinate his convictions to expediency but would follow them wherever they might lead him. The appointment was to be a singularly fortunate one for India, for, in Mr Wedgwood Benn, Lord Irwin had a colleague who could enter fully into his own ideals, understand his policy, and be relied upon to stand by him in any difficulty, whether it arose at home or in India. From this point of view his appointment could hardly have been bettered, and both of them, the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, entered immediately upon two years of close, fruitful and fateful co operation.

Their work together began almost from the day of Lord Irwin's arrival in England. After hearing the

full and authoritative expose of the Indian situation which Lord Irwin made, Mr Wedgwood Benn found himself able to agree with the Viceroy as to the steps necessary to restore the political position in India, and put the initiative once more in the hands of the Government. But, as their conversations proceeded, it became clear that the action that Lord Irwin and Mr Wedgwood Benn regarded as necessary was not likely to be approved in all its parts by either the Liberal or the Conservative Party, and not by Sir John Simon, who was now preparing his Report for submission to Parliament. Briefly, Lord Irwin proposed to take two steps, each of the utmost gravity. The first was to bring together representatives of Parliament, of the Indian States, and of all sections of political opinion in British India to discuss the whole question of the political and constitutional future of India. This step could not fail to heal the breach caused by the omission of Indians from the Statutory Commission, for it offered them the opportunity which they had long demanded, of discussion of their problems on equal terms with accredited representatives of Great Britain. With regard to this step there was full agreement between the leaders of all the English political parties and also on the part of Sir John Simon. Indeed, Sir John Simon's own mind had been working in this direction already, and as his Report published almost a year later was to show, he understood fully that a satisfactory solution of the Indian political problem must be a comprehensive solution, that is, one which included All-India, the Indian States, or 'Indian India,' as it is so often called, and British India, and he was the first to suggest the calling

of the Indian Princes into conference. From this suggestion ultimately grew the wider conception of the Round Table Conference, and the part played by Sir John Simon in this connection should not be forgotten.

Mr Wedgwood Benn consulted the party leaders and Sir John Simon, and found that he would receive their support in the proposal to summon representatives of British and Indian India to confer with representatives of Parliament.

The second step, however, which he and Lord Irwin proposed to take, met with a very different reception. As the result of his intensive first-hand study of the Indian situation, and of his continuous personal contact with leaders of Indian political thought, Lord Irwin had come to the conclusion that it was necessary for His Majesty's Government to state frankly that the goal of India's political progress should be dominion status, and not any lesser status. Unless this were done, Indian politicians were bound to go on agitating for it, and they would not co-operate whole heartedly in any scheme of reforms which His Majesty's Government might decide on. By itself, the summons to a Round Table Conference would not have achieved the immediate object of Lord Irwin's policy, which was to rally Indian opinion again to the side of the Government of India, and to put the latter in its rightful position of political and moral leadership of the people of India. Time after time, Congress leaders and leaders of allied bodies of opinion, both in the legislatures and in the country outside, had demanded the summoning of a Round Table Conference of a very different kind from that now contemplated by Lord Irwin and Mr Wedgwood Benn. They wanted a Conference

which should be a constituent assembly, charged with the express purpose of drawing up for India a Constitution of which the basis should be full dominion status for India. In order to get these parties—whose active co-operation is necessary for the functioning of any Indian Constitution—once more into co-operation with the British and Indian Governments, and once more into constructive, as apart from destructive or obstructive, work, Lord Irwin saw clearly that their aspirations in the matter of dominion status had to be met in some way. He proposed to meet them in statesmanlike fashion by admitting that His Majesty's Government did accept dominion status as the ultimate goal of India's progress, and was about to call a conference to consider what steps could be taken now towards that goal. Lord Irwin knew, and meant to make it quite clear, that the goal could not be reached immediately because of the conditions which have been shown in earlier parts of this book, and he knew that in spite of noisy protestations to the contrary in India, there was widespread appreciation of the necessity for restrictions on Indian autonomy in certain vitally important departments of her Government. The declaration regarding dominion status which he proposed to make would, at one and the same time, concede the principle of dominion status while leaving it open to His Majesty's Government to insist on any reasonable safeguards made necessary by India's circumstances. It would have satisfied the *amour-propre* of Indians of all but the most extreme section of political opinion.

His proposal failed to secure support outside the Labour Government, which, nevertheless, assented to

his making the declaration with regard to dominion status. Lord Irwin personally pressed his views on leading members of the other two British parties, but without securing their agreement. Yet he decided that circumstances in India demanded it, and on his return to India in October he issued his now famous announcement on the last day of the month.

The publication was an event of first-class importance both in India and in Great Britain, and, indeed, in other parts of the world. Of its statesmanship, as far as India was concerned, and of the accuracy with which Lord Irwin had read the situation in that country there can be no question of any sort. At a stroke it transformed the entire situation. As it happened, many of the most important political leaders in the country were in Delhi on the day the announcement was made. Of the Congress leaders, Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Jawaharlal Nehru were present. The two great Hindu Mahasabha leaders, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Dr. Moonje, were there, and so were the two most prominent Liberal leaders in all India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar. It could not be denied that this was almost as influential a meeting as could be got together. Had the Moslems, the Justice Party, and the European leaders been there it would have been completely representative. Many of these leaders assembled in a spirit of something like enthusiasm to discuss the announcement, and, for a time, it appeared likely that they would accept its offer unconditionally. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru almost alone was hostile, for he saw that the announcement opened a way to constructive political work for which



names to a document in which co-operation was promised, coupled, not with binding conditions, but with strong recommendations. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and others lost no time in making it quite clear that they had not the slightest intention of allowing this new and very fruitful move by Lord Irwin to be sabotaged, and they argued very forcibly that it was worth while, and, indeed, was necessary, to go some distance with the extremists in order to arrive at the greatest possible common measure of agreement. In any case, extremists had moved further to the Right than they had to the Left. Moreover, while this meeting in Delhi was taking place another meeting was being held in Bombay, which, again, was attended by leaders of all the sections which had boycotted the Statutory Commission. This meeting, with the exception of one or two dissentients belonging to the extreme Left Wing of Congress, unanimously welcomed the announcement and accepted its offer without any recommendations or conditions of any sort. Lastly, and in some ways most important of all, the representative body of non-official European opinion in India, the European Association, came out with a forceful and manly manifesto in support of Lord Irwin. The Vice-President of the Association wired as follows to the Secretary of State:

‘We, the Council of the European Association, desire you to convey to His Majesty’s Government our firm support of the Viceroy’s recent declaration. We consider that such declaration is not ill-timed, and that it clarifies an issue already clear to all competent observers. We consider that the Indian Statutory

Commission has not suffered in prestige, but by its work has alone made possible the contemplated conference.'

The simple truth is that Lord Irwin had accomplished a feat almost without precedent in the history of our dealings with India. At a stroke, he had entirely transformed the political situation, replacing ill-will and distrust by good-will, and the beginnings, at any rate, of a renewed confidence in British rule and its intentions towards India. He had broken through the trench formations and found himself, for the moment, with the initiative and the power of manoeuvre in his hands. The next word was with Parliament in England, and it was not, unfortunately, of a kind calculated to help Lord Irwin or to strengthen his hands. The debate was opened in the House of Lords on 5th November by Lord Reading, who called attention to the Viceroy's statement in regard to the attainment by India of dominion status, and asked His Majesty's Government to state the reasons for the extraordinary course of making this pronouncement without having consulted the Statutory Commission upon it, whether the conditions and reservations contained in the preamble to the Government of India Act of 1919 remained of full force and applicable to dominion status, and whether the statement implied any change in the policy hitherto declared or in the time when this status may be attained. Lord Reading welcomed the invitation issued by Lord Irwin to the proposed Round Table Conference, but he was very uneasy indeed about that part of Lord Irwin's announcement relating to dominion status. Lord

Reading himself had been consulted on the subject of the Conference and its proposed extension to the Princes, with which again he agreed. But, as he explained in his speech to the Lords, from the first moment the proposal to include the term 'dominion status' in Lord Irwin's announcement was raised, he objected to it emphatically. He did so on three grounds, the first because he thought it improper to make a statement of this kind without the assent of the Simon Commission, whose prestige and authority must be undermined by it. His next objection was 'that it was no use using phrases which would not convey a clear meaning to India and to every one in this country, but more especially to India, where there is greater opportunity for misconception and misinterpretation—that there should be no opportunity for that, and that the only way to counteract it was to state in plain, unequivocal terms what was meant and what was intended by the Government.'

Lastly, Lord Reading urged that the use of the expression 'dominion status' would lead to further demands from Indian politicians and that almost before the statement had reached them 'there would be immediate requests made for a period of time and for other concessions which in present conditions it would be impossible for the Government to make.' Lord Reading developed his objections at some length, and in many ways his speech was the most important made throughout the whole debate in either House. He was speaking with all the prestige of an ex Viceroy of India, and Indians knew that both on this ground and by reason of his own personal prestige with his countrymen any word of Lord Reading's was weighty

Also, he was speaking as the representative in the Lords of the great historic Liberal Party, which, in India, was still regarded as the champion of the oppressed and downcast all over the world, and which still in Indian eyes wore the halo of Gladstone and Ripon and Bright. It is unfortunate that reports of debates in Parliament can reach India only in tabloid form, because Lord Reading's speech at first was misunderstood even by his own countrymen in India. In the House of Lords he said in so many words that neither he nor his party objected to dominion status 'being regarded as the ideal which we eventually hoped to reach in relation to the Government of India,' but the use of the term in existing circumstances could not be approved by him. Lord Parmoor, replying on behalf of the Government, stated explicitly that the conditions and reservations contained in the declaration of 1917 and the preamble to the Government of India Act, 1919, remained of full force and effect and applicable to dominion status. He explained the publication of the announcement in advance of the Report of the Simon Commission by saying that the Government were most anxious to do nothing that would in any way prejudice the position of the Commission, but they did want to do whatever they legitimately could to prepare a good atmosphere for the reception of the Commission's Report, and also to remove doubts which had been gathering strength in India of late years as to the sincerity of the British Government in its declared intentions towards India's future political progress. The general effect of Lord Parmoor's speech, particularly as summarised for the Indian press, unfortunately gave the impression that the reference to

dominion status was hardly more than a formality, since, as Lord Parmoor pointed out without any sort of ambiguity, it left all the reservations and safeguards of previous announcements unaffected. This impression was reinforced by Lord Passfield's speech later in the debate, who spoke with an authority on the Government side almost if not quite equal to that of Lord Parmoor.

'I repeat quite definitely,' said Lord Passfield, 'that what we call the reservations which are expressed in the preamble in the Government of India Act are law, and they cannot be altered . . . unless and until Parliament at some future time should decide.'

Lord Birkenhead, leading for the Conservatives, asked the members of the Simon Commission 'to treat that which the Government have instructed or authorised the Viceroy to do as irrelevance.' He complained that the announcement made by Lord Irwin was intended to appease certain persons in India who had been threatening the Government, and that the only way to discharge our obligations to India was to refuse to yield to threats at any time.

The debate in the Lords cast a chill over India which was in no way thawed by the subsequent debate in the House of Commons on the same subject two days later on the motion for the adjournment. There is no need to go into any detail of this debate, for, on the whole, it followed much the same lines as that in the House of Lords. Mr. Baldwin, after explaining the circumstances in which he had at first personally approved of the issue of the statement concerning dominion status without in any way binding his colleagues of the

Conservative Party—he was in France when he was asked, and could not consult them—stated that on learning that the Simon Commission had not approved of the statement, he wrote to the acting Prime Minister that in the altered circumstances neither he nor his party could support the publication of the note. Mr. Lloyd George attacked the reference to dominion status on much the same grounds as Lord Reading, namely, that it was bound to be misunderstood in India and was bound to give rise to extreme demands which could not possibly be met by the British Government. Mr. Wedgwood Benn defended Lord Irwin's statement in a fighting speech, and even that still more doughty fighter, Mr. Lloyd George, in a fierce little bout of sword-play, was unable to move him or shake his support in any way. The Prime Minister insisted that the circumstances of India made the declaration expedient, and they stood by that decision. Sir John Simon took only a small part in the debate, but in a few straightforward sentences he asked that he and his colleagues might be allowed to get on with their work without interruption, a speech and an attitude both dignified and generous. As far as India was concerned, the only bright spot in the whole of Parliament's intervention was Mr. Wedgwood Benn's speech which, in conjunction with Lord Irwin's own announcement, gave every Indian leader who wished for peace some ground on which to stand. But there was another effect, subtle, and at first not easily perceptible, and this was a strengthening of the personal affection—no weaker word will do—in which Lord Irwin was by this time held in India. Even those who decried the importance of the offer in the state-

ment which he had made in his announcement realised and acknowledged frequently and publicly that Lord Irwin was staking a good deal in the cause of India's political progress. After the debate in Parliament nobody could fail to see that he had not hesitated to run counter to the views of the most powerful and influential sections of English public opinion on the subject of India. The policy on which he was now embarked was so patently his own, and he had fought for it with such skill and knowledge and determination, that he could never, with even the shadow of plausibility, be accused of being the mere mouthpiece of the Government or any other political body in England. He had done a great thing. He had evolved an Indian policy designed to suit the conditions of India and to satisfy the aspirations of all reasonable sections of Indian thought, and in the difficult and stormy days ahead it was to be discovered that the greater part of political India was prepared to stand by him and follow his lead, in spite of discouraging circumstances, even against Mr Gandhi.

The first expression of this feeling for and confidence in Lord Irwin was not long in coming. A little over a week after the debate in the House of Commons the Indian leaders who had met at Delhi reassembled at Allahabad to discuss the announcement again in the light of what had happened at Westminster. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru felt that he had strong weapons now in his hand, and he used the words of the English party leaders, some of which have been quoted above, to the greatest possible effect. Mr Gandhi wavered, and some of the lesser Congress leaders wished to jettison the Viceroy's announcement with a shattering

counter-blast provided by the speeches in Parliament and the familiar deductions to be drawn therefrom as to the insincerity of British politicians with regard to India's political future. But the Indian Liberals and the Hindu Mahasabha, and even some Congressmen, would have none of this. Lord Irwin was fighting the battle for what he conceived to be right and necessary for India, and, as far as they were concerned, they were going to give him a safe flank. So the Delhi manifesto was reissued unchanged. But Mr. Gandhi was undecided, and many of his colleagues at the meeting watched him with growing anxiety. Their anxiety was justified, for as the days went by, whispers multiplied to the effect that he meant to insist on the recommendations of the manifesto as conditions precedent to the participation of Congress in the Conference. But it was felt that even he could not, in common decency, come to any such important decision without consulting Lord Irwin, and it was arranged that he should see the Viceroy at Delhi on 23rd December on his way up to the All-India Congress Session, which, this year, was to be held in Lahore. It was to be a fateful day for Lord Irwin. He returned to Delhi that morning from the south of India, and as his train approached the capital a powerful bomb was exploded under it by electricity, worked by the would-be assassin from the jungle some distance away from the line. Happily the attempt was unsuccessful, but the skill with which it had been made, and its objective, warned India that the new and dangerous phase of terrorism, of which we have seen some of the incidents, was formally established, and that to India's other troubles political murder and anarchy were to be added. Unshaken by



the grim experience of the morning, Lord Irwin received Mr Gandhi, together with Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jinnah, in the afternoon. It is certain that the two Congress leaders had not taken their two companions into their confidence, for both Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jinnah expected that Mr Gandhi's conference with the Viceroy would take the form of a serious discussion of reasonable conditions on which the Congress could be represented at the Round Table Conference. But Mr Gandhi was in his very worst mood, petulant, impractical, full of airy irrelevancies. All that he would say was that Congress would have nothing to do with the Conference unless Lord Irwin promised that its only function should be to draw up a scheme of full dominion status for India, to be put into operation immediately. Clearly this was impossible, and as the interview closed, Lord Irwin knew that, for a time at any rate, one of his great hopes, namely, to have a Round Table Conference completely representative of Indian opinion, a hope to realise which he had worked long and patiently and risked much, was doomed to disappointment. Mr Gandhi had cut off the All India National Congress from the fruitful co operation to which Lord Irwin had invited it. But he had done more than this, as speedily became apparent. He had cut off Congress from all the rest of political India. Except from Congress newspapers and supporters, he received no support anywhere in his attitude, and even some of the Congress organs and some of the important Congress leaders in the provinces openly deprecated the course of conduct to which he had committed himself and his party.

Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru, other ex presidents of the Congress were there, the Hindu Mahasabha leaders were in strength, and so were the two rival heroes of the Youth Movement, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Subash Chandra Bose. Later on, the two Ali brothers appeared, grim, disturbing personalities these, for they had not come to support Mr Gandhi, or indulge in peaceful platitudes, or to sketch pious resolutions. They had come for business, to state their terms, and to leave Mr Gandhi to accept or reject them as he thought fit, and themselves free to take any action which seemed necessary. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the President this year, and he and his father and Mr Gandhi had decided that the main resolution to be put before the Congress would be one declaring complete independence as India's goal. But from their point of view the situation was disquieting in the extreme, for they found themselves supported at first only by youths and the floating riff-raff whose expenses are paid by interested parties who want to be certain of a number of votes when one resolution or other has to be put to the question. The older and more responsible Congressmen and the Hindu Mahasabhaites in a body opposed Mr Gandhi and the Nehrus and their proposed resolution. Mr Bose, painfully conscious of the necessity of out-Heroding Herod, professed dissatisfaction with the resolution because it did not contain clauses empowering Congress followers to take immediately all necessary steps to achieve independence. Hordes of newspaper correspondents were present. British, Indian, American and foreign, and these, knowing nothing of the under-currents, seized joyfully on the picturesque surface

details, the processions of horsemen, the parades of volunteers, the surging mobs and their loudly voiced adulation of Mr Gandhi, and all the other colourful details of such a gathering, and broadcast them throughout the world. But nothing was said of the dire struggle going on inside the Subjects Committee. Indeed, it is doubtful if many of them knew of the existence of the Subjects Committee, but it is in this body that the real work of the Session is done. Its members are the most influential of Congress leaders and ex-leaders, and what they decide is automatically accepted by the open Session. Hour after hour, and day by day in the Subjects Committee, Mr Gandhi and the Nehrus fought with their backs to the wall against the hostility of other leaders. Leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mr Kelkar, one of the leaders of the powerful Maharashtra group, Mrs Naidu, the world-famous poetess and ex-president of the Congress, Dr Ansari, another ex-president and leader of the small Moslem group which still remained within the Congress—all these fought against the resolution, condemning the unwisdom of utterly rejecting the promising offer made by Lord Irwin. But Mr Gandhi was immovable and had to be given his way unless the Session was to be brought to a violent disruption. So the resolution was passed, and independence and extremism became the official creed of the Congress. But in one matter Mr Gandhi did withstand the wilder elements. He insisted that the Congress should pass a resolution strongly condemning the murderous attempt on Lord Irwin. This Session of the Congress was a Pyrrhic victory for Mr Gandhi, and one action of his immediately after its conclusion

showed how badly he was shaken. It will be remembered that at the previous year's session of Congress it had been resolved that civil disobedience should be started at the beginning of 1930, unless the Government had accepted the provisions of the Nehru Report in the meantime. The provisions had not been accepted, but in an interview for publication when leaving Lahore Mr. Gandhi said that he was convinced that the circumstances of India were not ripe for civil disobedience, and he did not propose to embark on it at present.

The session of the All-India National Congress ended with the close of the year. 1929 had witnessed great developments in India, some of them good, some of them bad. Hindu-Moslem rivalry had definitely assumed a new, more far reaching, more fateful form, the shadow of revolutionary activity and crime was darkening over the land, and the strongest and best-organised political party had embarked on a course of action which could lead to nothing but unrest and bitter trouble, and, in the end, a retracing of steps taken with pain and loss. But against this, conditions had been established which, with no more luck than could justly be hoped for, might in the end prove the solvent of the other calamitous developments of the year. For Lord Irwin had restored life, and movement, and reality to Indian politics, and best of all, he had got formally on his side powerful sections of opinion, and political leaders whose influence was second only to that of Mr. Gandhi himself. But as 1929 turned into 1930 these good things were not very clear and the outlook was unpromising. The sky was black with clouds that were not to pass without breaking into storm.

## CHAPTER XI

### MR. GANDHI'S COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

WHILST Congress was meeting in Lahore, a great gathering of men of moderate opinion had taken place in Madras under the ægis of the All-India Liberal Federation. Here there was no confusion of thought or purpose. All who had gathered together were quite satisfied that they ought to support Lord Irwin and prepare for the Round Table Conference. Mr. Gandhi received the news of this meeting on his way from Lahore, and it must have helped to confirm him in his opinion that the time was not ripe for civil disobedience. Also, the split in the ranks of the Muslim League was about to be formally closed, and, in any case, Moslems were now quite definitely out of any movement which the Congress might inaugurate. Indeed, they were certain to oppose it actively. But whilst the main strength of the country was thus slowly but surely ranging itself on the side of the Round Table Conference, a sudden danger sprang up from a now painfully familiar quarter. Mr. Patel once more found himself embroiled with the Government, and this time with more support from the elected members of the House than ever before. After the bomb outrage in April, the question of the future protection of the Assembly naturally became one of burning interest to the members. Some wanted the old police arrangements to continue, but others, headed by Mr. Patel,

wanted to have a special protective staff under the control of the President. A committee of the Assembly was appointed to consider the matter under the chairmanship of Sir James Crerar, the Home Member. Sir James found himself opposed to the rest of his Committee, who were in favour of the recruitment of a special protective staff. But Sir James stuck to his guns, and when the Assembly met for the opening of the winter session, the President, looking from the Chair into the galleries, saw the police there as usual. At once he ordered the galleries to be cleared of the public, and for days the debates went on *in camera*. Lord Irwin was away from Delhi when all this happened, and unfortunately the Home Member, owing to a series of accidents, failed to convey a message from the Viceroy to Mr. Patel. Interested parties were not slow to represent the omission as deliberate, and designed to embroil the relations of the President with the Viceroy. Mr. Patel himself shared, or at any rate professed to share, these suspicions, and lost no opportunities of making the passage of Government work difficult. An extraordinarily acute state of tension sprang into being in the Assembly, the whole of the Opposition except the Moslems fiercely championing the President's cause and giving rein once more to all their old suspicions. As it happened the Congress benches were largely depleted because part of the resolution passed at the Lahore Congress ordered Congress members of the Legislatures to vacate their seats. This order was by no means fully obeyed, an interesting circumstance which showed the deep *divergence of opinion which had been brought about* within the ranks of Congress itself. Nevertheless, the

Congress benches were not full, and the Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu members were in a somewhat sullen mood. Mr Gandhi's associates knew by this time that he was intending, after all, to start another civil disobedience movement, and his public announcement to this effect was shortly to be made. All this time the fate of the Conference was trembling in the balance, for very little was necessary to induce the remainder of the depleted Opposition to walk out of the Assembly as they were being loudly entreated to do by Congress supporters and newspapers. Had they done so, they could not possibly have kept outside the civil disobedience movement, and the Round Table Conference in that event would not have been the Conference we know. But once again Lord Irwin's personal influence saved the situation, and he himself arranged a compromise between the divergent views of his Government and the President of the Assembly in the matter of the protection of the inner precincts of the Assembly.

But outside, in the country, things were going badly. Revolutionary crime was definitely afoot once more, and the discovery of bomb factories on a large scale by the Calcutta police and the arrest at short intervals of time of bomb-carriers in Lahore and elsewhere in India showed that organisations for murder and anarchic outrage had been carried further than ever before. Urban labour, particularly in the bigger centres of industry, was being instigated to trouble, and it was known that strong efforts were being made to bring about a general strike with the object of paralysing the Government and making it impossible, among other things, to move troops and police. In the

Bardoli area of Gujerat in the Bombay Presidency, the old movement for the non payment of land revenue to the Government was again in full swing, and Mr Gandhi and his chief lieutenants, particularly Mr Vallabhai Patel, brother of the President of the Legislative Assembly, were determined to make it into a real test of the Government's power to overcome this peculiarly difficult form of passive resistance. They meant to make the Government put forth its full strength in this one area in the hope that the stubborn intransigence of the peasants would win, which, as they knew, would mean the simultaneous inauguration of a number of similar passive resistance movements in various parts of India, particularly in the United Provinces, where agrarian trouble is never far below the surface, and where, indeed, it broke out with violence this year, testing severely the statesmanship of even Sir Malcolm Hailey, greatest of provincial Governors. But for a time all eyes were on Mr Gandhi. He started his new civil disobedience movement in March, and the world watched him as he made his slow progress from his house to the sea coast, to the place which he had selected for his violation of the Salt Law. Arrived there, he took the steps necessary to commit a technical violation of the Salt Law, and so render himself liable to criminal proceedings.

A fierce controversy raged in India and in England over the apparent weakness of the Government of India in regard to Mr Gandhi's conduct. It is true that very serious consequences flowed from this new campaign of civil disobedience, and many who are skilled in prophesying after the event have insisted that the arrest of Mr Gandhi, as soon as he announced his



intention of defying the law, would have prevented the dire consequences which flowed from his action. In England, in certain quarters, denunciation attained lyric quality, and whatever else we may have lost by the failure of the Indian Government to arrest Mr. Gandhi at the outset our literature of political polemics is richer by a few gems of Mr. Churchill's eloquence. It is worth noticing, however, that responsible British-owned newspapers in India, some of which criticised the policy of Lord Irwin and his Government at this time, nevertheless showed that they knew that there was another side to the question, and that the matter was not quite so simple as Mr. Churchill and Lord Lloyd, and other philosophic observers from a distance, imagined. The truth is that Lord Irwin was placed once again in a desperate dilemma, the same that we have already noticed. He was playing for a big stake, no less a stake than the settlement of the great problems in issue between Britain and India, and between the minorities and the majorities in the latter country, by means of conciliation and agreement and compromise through the Round Table Conference. By now, this had become the vital spark of his policy, and whatever else may be said about it, it was a policy of promise and hope. But, although by the summer of 1930 the sympathy of political India was with Lord Irwin, many of the leaders, and particularly many Hindu leaders between the Centre and the Left, were nicely poised on the razor edge of indecision. The immediate arrest of Mr. Gandhi, before he had committed any offence, would, it is known, have precipitated these leaders down on the side of Congress and non-co-operation again.

A very illuminating incident shows the truth of this diagnosis. During the winter session of the Legislative Assembly, when the Bardoli agitation was at its height, Mr Vallabhai Patel was arrested and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment for his activities in Bardoli. At once the leader of the Nationalist Party in the Assembly, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, moved the adjournment of the House as a censure on the Government for Mr Patel's arrest. It is known that Pandit Malaviya had taken a leading part in trying to keep Mr Gandhi out of non co operation and on the side of the Round Table Conference, and among Hindus anywhere in India his influence can safely be said to be second only to that of Mr Gandhi. Throughout the debate the Pandit showed signs of the deepest discomposure, and one speaker referred to the very likely event of the arrest of Mr Gandhi at no distant date, and showed that it would have the greatest possible effect on the hopes centred in the Round Table Conference. At once, Pandit Malaviya snapped out in tones which startled the Assembly like the crack of a pistol, 'Who would go to the Round Table Conference if Mahatma Gandhi were in prison?' and a quick, fierce shout of assent from the Opposition benches showed that he was speaking for more than himself. It is not easy to understand the motives which prompted Mr Gandhi to take the step he did in reviving civil disobedience, because it is quite certain that conditions in India had not improved from his point of view since he made his chastened confession of 1st January that India was not ready for civil disobedience. On the contrary, the ideal of the Round Table Conference had gained in attractiveness and support, and the most

reasonable supposition is that Mr. Gandhi hoped to break it, or, at any rate, to cripple it very badly by forcing many Nationalist leaders to declare against it owing to his arrest on nothing more than the threat of civil disobedience. Yet, over against this, must be set the fact that widespread disturbances and grievous calamities and loss of life did occur as the result of his action, and it is true that the Government of India suffered tactical reverses by their apparent weakness and indecision. These things were present to Lord Irwin's mind and to the minds of his advisers in his Executive Council, but the Round Table Conference, and all that it stood for, was the strategy of the big political campaign upon which he had embarked, and he decided to subordinate tactical to strategical situations.

India waited to see what would happen to Mr. Gandhi, and when nothing happened Congress took courage again, imitators appeared to make salt in other places, and the flying squad of Congress organisers sped busily about the countryside and held meetings in the towns, exhorting the masses to follow the Mahatma's lead, as they had done ten years and less before. Some journalists, including foreigners, who interviewed Mr. Gandhi before and during his march to the sea coast, reported that he was not pleased at the way events were shaping, and he himself had made it known that he expected to be arrested immediately; he set foot outside his ashram. It is not an unreasonable inference that the waiting policy of Lord Irwin and his Government embarrassed him. Certainly it forced him to go back on one declaration which he had made with much dramatic force, namely, that he would

never leave the sea coast and his salt-making until India had won her independence. He knew, of course, that his battle was not going to be won among the salt pans of Dandi, and a comparatively short stay in that insalubrious spot, with a Machiavellian Government not only not arresting him but positively making conditions for him and his followers as salubrious and comfortable as possible, proved intolerably irksome. Mr. Gandhi, therefore, was the first to fail in the trial of patience between himself and Lord Irwin, and he removed to the less exacting conditions of Bombay. But he had sown the wind, and the Government—and India—were about to reap the whirlwind. For all the inflammable elements, whose presence in India has been already noticed, rushed, as it were, violently together, combining like chemical elements to form a new compound. Revolutionaries, discontented workmen, disheartened peasantry, youthful intelligentsia, Congress organisers, city riff-raff, common criminals, and, new and fateful portent, women of gentle birth and upbringing, all combined to bring about that state of tumultuous chaos, shot redly through by murder, arson, train-wrecking, rioting and various forms of ordinary crime which is compendiously described as civil disobedience. Swiftly the disturbances spread over India and variously they changed their shape from place to place. From mass meetings and attempts to raid salt depots, or to prepare and sell salt against the law, through rioting, police shooting and other violent stages, they progressed to the grim events of Chittagong and Peshawar, probably the high-water marks hitherto reached by revolutionary outbreak, and so to the age-old terror of the descent of the fighting

tribes of the border hills into the Indian plains. On 20th April in Chittagong in Bengal a band of revolutionaries, probably not less than a hundred strong, raided and destroyed the armouries belonging to the police and the railway volunteers. Six men were killed on the Government side, four Indians, one Anglo-Indian and a British sergeant-major. This was a new and very formidable development in revolutionary crime. Hitherto, the revolutionaries had been content to confine their activities to isolated murders or individual robberies of fire-arms or money. But now, armed with modern weapons and with some training and discipline, they had attacked an important headquarters, had secured a signal success, and, what is probably worse, had got away into the jungle with quantities of arms and ammunition. From that day to this the Government has not been able to account for all the insurgents who raided Chittagong, in spite of the employment of troops and police in a manner reminiscent of the tactics of a small frontier campaign.

The trouble in Peshawar was almost as serious as in Chittagong. For some days, the supineness of the local administration allowed the mob to hold control of Peshawar City virtually unchecked, in spite of the presence in Peshawar and its neighbourhood of a division of troops, of civil police and frontier constabulary, and of a detachment of the Air Force at Risalpur within a few minutes' flight. Peshawar City is the focus on which converge streams of humanity from the fighting tribes of the Border, from warlike Afghanistan, and from Central Asia, and it holds, at any given moment, a mob potentially as turbulent and dangerous as any the world can show. The weakness

of the local authorities gave this mob the opportunity of which it is always dreaming, the opportunity to loot and destroy to their hearts' content. Naturally, the agents of Congress were not idle, and they supplied catchwords and perhaps even a certain organisation, but in essence the Peshawar *émeute* was a swift, savage uprising of a predatory mob bent on loot and destruction. The only bright feature in all this story is the strength and swiftness with which authority was reasserted after a change had taken place in the headship of the frontier province. There was one incident in the Peshawar trouble more grave than any that had happened in India for some time, and this was the refusal of some men of the 39th Garhwal Rifles to do their duty in face of the mob. Hardly any regiment of the Indian Army won greater glory in the Great War than the Garhwal Rifles, and the defection of part of the regiment sent a shock through India, of apprehension to some, of exultation to others.

But even this is not the end of the grim story of the early summer months of 1930. Inevitably Hindu-Moslem tension increased, for the Moslems as a community kept out of the disturbance and ominous rumblings began to be heard again. In Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpur, Lahore and other places of less importance the situation began to be dangerous. Lord Irwin had done his best, but, Conference or no Conference, he could hold his hand no longer, for the crimson flares of Chittagong and Peshawar lit up a scene fast falling into mere anarchy, and on 5th May Mr Gandhi was arrested, and the Governments of India and the provinces proceeded to stop the drift into anarchy which Mr Gandhi had begun. Out of

its scabbard came the Viceroy's heavy weapon of the Ordinance, that is, his power of extraordinary legislation. Between the middle of April and the end of December, ten Ordinances were issued, an unprecedented number, and their titles are epilogues to grim passages in Indian history. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance is aimed at the gunmen and bomb-throwers in the east of India, and crimes like the murder of Mr. Lowman, the Inspector-General of the Bengal Police, at Dacca, and the wounding of Mr. Hodson, District Superintendent of Police, are proof enough of the need for the measure. The Sholapur Martial Law Ordinance closes an episode in the west, during which mobs burned policemen alive, and Hindus and Moslems gathered for an inter-communal clash which would have been more than usually bloody. The Unlawful Instigation Ordinances are directed against the agrarian unrest in Bombay and the United Provinces and elsewhere, whilst the Peshawar Martial Law Ordinance takes us to the wild events which happened during the summer on that restless border. And so the tale goes on. Newspapers, unlawful associations, intimidation, are all dealt with by their appropriate Ordinances, and the jails filled and passions grew.

But the technique of civil disobedience has been considerably improved since Mr. Gandhi first used it. Particularly on the economic side it has developed into a much more efficient instrument of agitation that it was some years ago. In the early days of non-cooperation the obstruction of liquor licence auctions and the picketing of liquor shops themselves had been used to embarrass the provincial Governments, by hinder-

ing the working of the excise administration. The engineering of strikes for political purposes and no-tax campaigns were all economic weapons which were tried by Mr Gandhi and his lieutenants. None of these, however, were found to be very satisfactory, not even the no-tax campaigns, because they demanded for their success sacrifice and initiative on the part of large masses of the people, and the display of these qualities was, as a rule, sporadic and short-lived. These weapons in the economic armoury of civil disobedience have therefore fallen into disuse to some extent, and the Working Committee of Congress now concentrates on the boycott of British goods, with the further refinement recently of the boycott of British owned shops and businesses and British banks, finance houses, and exchange and bullion brokers. It cannot be denied that this comprehensive boycott is a much more effective economic instrument than any of the earlier ones, and it is obvious from all that is happening that it is going to be strengthened and perfected with use. It was employed very prominently in the 1930 civil disobedience movement inaugurated by Mr Gandhi, when, for the first time, women of the more respectable classes were used as agents in this form of economic warfare. When the boycott of British goods was first started some years ago it was meant to be only for temporary purposes and to achieve only individual or limited objectives, but now it is meant to be a permanent feature of Congress activity. To a certain extent goods, particularly cotton textiles, from other countries are involved, because the paymasters of Congress include numbers of men interested in the Indian cotton industry. But the main attack is



directed against British goods. Certain foreign piece-goods markets, like those in Bombay, Delhi, and Amritsar in the Punjab, which is a very big centre for the distribution of foreign textiles, have been seriously embarrassed by the movement already. However, the piece goods merchants are already developing their defensive tactics, are importing British textiles under assumed names, and, after removing distinctive marks, are able to sell them as the very highest class Indian goods. It is impossible to attempt a quantitative analysis of the effect of the boycott from 1930 onwards because its results are complicated by the general slump, and by economic conditions peculiar to India or to Great Britain which, in any case, would have caused a falling off in the imports of British textiles and other goods into India. But whatever its actual results may be, the boycott deserves close attention as a striking example of the way in which the technique and scope of extremist political agitation are improving in efficiency and growing in extent. The latest developments which have been extended to banks and other financial and commercial organisations are likely to be particularly dangerous because they are the work of a comparatively few wealthy and influential men, and because there are Indian and foreign concerns available to take the place, to some extent, of the boycotted British interests.

It was only to be expected that the tumultuous events of this summer, and the unloosing of forces and passions of various kinds, and, often, of opposite tendencies, should cause some unsteadiness in the ranks of those Indian politicians whom Lord Irwin, with such skill and patience, had wheeled into line on his side.

Accordingly, we find that for a time many of the Hindu Mahasabha representatives, and others in close touch with Congress, or, even, on its Right Wing, who before Mr Gandhi's arrest had refused to countenance or help his agitation, now showed signs of once more dissociating themselves from any sort of co-operation with the Government, whilst some, even, publicly withdrew their support of the Round Table Conference. These were discouraging circumstances, and all the more discouraging because, as was only natural, inter-communal disunity and antagonisms once again showed their ugly and threatening faces. It had long been the dream of Indian political leaders of all communities to achieve a united front in support of India's demands for political reform, and the approaching session of the Round Table Conference gave added point and weight to this desire. One of the most notable attempts made during recent years to bring about such unity was made by the famous leader of the Justice Party, Sir A. P. Patro, who, towards the end of the winter session of the Legislature, convened a fully representative conference of all classes and communities in Delhi to go once more into the matter. The European community in India were represented by accredited leaders whose presence carried on the fine traditions of non-official European political activity in India, for it must not be forgotten that the real founders of the All-India National Congress were non-official and official Britons. Throughout the course of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms the non-official Europeans in the Central and Provincial Legislatures *have played an invaluable part by bringing to their work the fairness, the political instinct, and the*

determination typical of their race. Year by year their appreciation of, and approximation to reasonable and practical Indian political opinion has grown, until, at the present moment, it would be difficult to point to any material differences between the views of the majority of the European Association, and men like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the late Sir Muhammad Shafi. But, as always, the question of safeguards for the minority communities proved fatal to negotiation. Most of the Hindus wanted these unity discussions to be postponed till they could be held in London, where, it was hoped, the impartial atmosphere, and the knowledge that they were all working together for a great forward movement in India's political development would induce a spirit of generosity and mutual toleration which alone can find the way to the solution of this ancient and very thorny problem. Very quickly, therefore, Sir A. P. Patro's conference divided into two groups, the Hindus and the minorities, and, in spite of the influence of Sir A. P. Patro himself and the leaders of the other sections and communities, the conference had to break up, not only with nothing accomplished, but, perhaps, with the task of future reconciliation made just a little more difficult. This, unfortunately, has been the experience of all these unity conferences, from Mr. Gandhi's abortive conference of 1924 onwards.

The date of the Round Table Conference was fixed—it was to open in October—and already the exciting and welcome rumour was flying through India that the King himself would open it; the delegates to the Conference were chosen and invited by Lord Irwin, and the question remained—who would go, and in

what circumstances would they go? India was not in a happy state. Revolutionary crime, strikes, political activities, legal and illegal, antagonism between the communities, Mr Gandhi's arrest, the doubts and hesitations of important leaders over their acceptance or non-acceptance of the invitation to the Conference, the agitation aroused by the publication of the Simon Commission Report, the necessary activities of the police in quelling disorder all over India—all these and many other disturbing elements had whipped the sea of Indian life into chaotic tumult, and it was difficult to see where the ship of state was driving. Almost unnoticed in the welter of internal politics the old, historic threat of aggression from the north-west raised its head again. The Afridis, from their hills about the Khyber Pass, had not failed to notice the disturbances in Peshawar and further afield in India, and, as always happens and always will happen when the frontier tribesmen get the idea that the British rule in India is weakening, they came down into the fat lowlands to see what profit they could come by. The troubles along the Peshawar border were perhaps no more than a reconnaissance in force by the Afridis, but strong armed bands penetrated well into the Peshawar district and for some time held a portion of this western borderland under their control. In Burma, rebellion sprang into vigorous life in the dense forests of certain districts. Beaten down at one point, it flickered up at another, and drew a good deal of Government strength and attention in its direction. Here were grave distractions for an already overburdened Government, and it was amid such circumstances that the delegates—all except those of the

Congress Party—who had been invited to London, accepted the invitation.

The Simon Commission was dogged by ill-luck of various kinds from beginning to end. The original boycott of its activities inevitably robbed its projected Report of a good deal of the weight and authority which it could have claimed had it been based on the full and frank co-operation and testimony of all sections of Indian political thought instead of, as it perforce was, largely on the evidence of some of those sections only. Sir John Simon and his colleagues took the greatest pains to acquaint themselves with the views of the boycotting elements, who had put forth their considered views in an authoritative document, namely the Nehru Report. Also, Sir John had not failed to study carefully the reactions to that Report, and he had thus a good deal of information concerning the views and aspirations of the boycotting sections. Nevertheless, the Nehru Report had been produced in opposition to and not in collaboration with the Commission. Next, the announcement of the proposal to hold a Round Table Conference, a proposal which, it will be remembered, originated with Sir John Simon himself, in effect reduced the Report of the Commission, when it should appear, to a part of the material which the Conference would have to consider. This, of course, was not the intention of either Lord Irwin or any of the British party leaders who had agreed to the Conference. Certainly it was not Sir John Simon's intention. But such an outcome was implicit in the decision to hold the Conference, for it is obvious that unless the Report accepted dominion status as the goal of India's political progress and

proposed definite steps to take her some distance on the way, and, moreover, unless it made proposals for a Constitution for India which should develop automatically into dominion status without the need for further commissions, or enquiries, or concessions by the British Parliament, it could have no chance of acceptance by the majority of Indian politicians or a very large part of Indian public opinion. The Report did not do these things for the reasons shown by the masterly discussion of Indian conditions contained in the first of the two volumes into which the Report was divided. But no section of Indian opinion at the time when the Report appeared was any longer prepared to give the Simon Report that unbiased and judicial consideration which was necessary for the value of its arguments and the validity of its discussions to be appreciated. One question and one only agitated the minds of leaders of Hindu opinion, and that was, 'How far does the Report propose to transfer control from British to Indian hands?' One question and one only agitated the minds of the leaders of the various minority communities, and that was, 'Are the safeguards for my community adequate?' The old, hitherto insoluble, dilemma in Indian politics comes up once again, and according to the answers given to these questions has opinion in India ranged itself. And, in fact, the answer was not satisfactory to any of the questioners. The Report did not propose the transfer of control to Indian hands, nor did any one of the communities feel that their interests and position had been adequately safeguarded. It was a discouraging response to one of the most important State Papers that has appeared for some years. But the plain truth

the simpler and more easily understood 'dominion status.' However, this authoritative declaration that India's political progress should be towards a future All-India Federation was of supreme value, and invests the Report, particularly in view of the developments at the Round Table Conference, with high value. The Commissioners state quite truly that this vision of an All-India Federation is a somewhat distant one, but the Report has the merit of making a thoroughly practical and statesmanlike suggestion for the first step towards its realisation. 'A Council for Greater India' is proposed, consisting of thirty members, ten of whom should represent the Indian States. The Council should be allowed to discuss matters of common concern to British India and the States, and should be consulted in all such. There is nothing grandiose in such a suggestion, but it is an eminently practical one, and some variant of it may yet prove to be one of the first steps towards the All-India Federation which the Simon Commission was the first body to put forward with real weight and authority.

Unfortunately, the proposals for British India stood no chance of acceptance by the overwhelmingly greater part of Indian opinion. The whole field of Indian government and administration is reviewed in meticulous detail, and a beautiful scheme of counter-vailing checks and balances is devised. It is impossible to go here into the multifarious details with which the Report deals, and we must concentrate on the essence of the whole matter, which is contained in the two questions asked, as we saw above, by the various sections of the Indian people. Why was the answer not satisfactory?

Throughout the whole of their tour in India probably nothing impressed the Commission more than the unanimity with which the demand for provincial autonomy was pressed, and, owing to the abstention of the more representative Hindu sections, the kind of provincial autonomy demanded was one which would exalt the position of the province into a position similar to that occupied by an Australian or American State. The most effective evidence given to the Commission was that given by the Moslems, and we have already seen what sort of provincial autonomy they want and why they want it. The outstanding feature of the Commission's recommendations for the government of British India was the abolition of dyarchy and the institution of provincial autonomy.

Part II of the Report contained its original and fruitful proposals. It dealt with the future government of the major provinces of India, which are, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the Punjab, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Behar and Orissa and Assam. Burma, it was rightly suggested, should be separated from India. Shorn of the important, but nevertheless subsidiary, proposals regarding the electoral system, the extension of the franchise and the size of the provincial legislature, the essence of the scheme proposed for the provinces was that each province should enjoy as far as possible complete provincial autonomy. This meant the abolition of 'dyarchy,' that is, the division of the administration into 'reserved' and 'transferred' departments, and the control of all departments, including the vital one of law and order, by a unitary Cabinet jointly responsible to the provincial legislature. Certain powers were to be given to



the Governor to direct that action be taken otherwise than in accordance with the advice of his Ministry, when events call for such a course. The Commissioners said that in their opinion the Governor should give such directions (a) in order to preserve the safety or tranquillity of the province, or (b) in order to prevent serious prejudice to one or more sections of the community as compared with other sections. In addition to these, which the Report regarded as the major occasions for the exercise of the Governor's overriding powers, others might be found in the necessity for securing the due fulfilment of any liability of Government in respect of items of expenditure not subject to the vote of the Legislature, for ensuring obedience to any order received by the Provincial Government from the Government of India or the Secretary of State, and, lastly, to carry out any duties which may be statutorily imposed on the Governor personally, such as duties in connection with service questions and responsibility for backward districts. In the exercise of his emergency powers in regard to the first two of these occasions mentioned above, the Governor is to act 'subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the Governor-General'. Lastly, in the event of a breakdown of the provincial Constitution, it was recommended 'that the Governor (subject, as in other matters, to the superintendence, direction and control of the Governor-General) should be given statutory powers to declare that a state of affairs has arisen under which the government of the Province cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Statute, and, thereupon, there should vest in the Governor all the

powers normally possessed by the Governor and his Cabinet. ' Clearly, the Constitution suggested for the provinces is something very different from cabinet government as we understand it in England, and it is highly desirable that the difference between the proposed position of the Provincial Governor in India and that of the constitutional head of a cabinet Government elsewhere, should be fully understood.

How large these reservations placed on provincial autonomy by these emergency powers of the Governor are, will be at once apparent. And this is by no means the whole story. These reservations and their implications must be studied in connection with the proposals for the future Central Government of India and the future relations between the latter and the Home Government, that is, in effect, with the Home Government's representative, the Secretary of State for India. Here we come to the pith and marrow of the whole business. Two other parts of the second volume dealt respectively with the Central Government, and with the relations between the Governor-General in Council (which is merely another name for the Central Government of India) and the Home Government. In view of what has been said already about the controls to which the action of the provincial cabinets and legislatures of the future will be subjected, it is obviously essential that we should understand the bases on which the authorities controlling these controls rest, and what are the sanctions behind them. The Governor-General is to remain 'the actual and active head of the Government.' Indeed, his authority and powers are, in some ways, to be increased since the Report suggested that he should in future exercise certain responsibilities

which at present are discharged by the Governor-General in Council. The careful reader will not have failed, for example, to notice that the Governor's emergency powers are to be exercised under the control of the Governor-General, not the Governor-General in Council. Next, there is to be no responsibility of members of the Central Government to the Central Legislature. Even proposals to introduce into the Central Government that partial responsibility represented by dyarchy were definitely rejected by the Commission. Again, control from the centre, but this time exercised by the Governor-General in Council, should, according to the Report, be exercised over the provincial governments in a restricted, but, nevertheless, important field. Within this field fall, among other subjects, the safeguarding of the administration of central subjects, matters which may, in the opinion of the Governor-General (not the Governor-General in Council) essentially affect the interests of any other part of India, the raising of loans, and the safeguarding of Imperial interests. Lastly, in this connection, the Governor General in Council should remain, in constitutional theory, under the direction and control of the Secretary of State for India. The latter will exercise control over the provincial governments only in connection with the special powers vested in the provincial governors. As we have seen, however, these amount to a very effective measure of control, and, as we shall find shortly, if the scheme contained in the Report should be brought into practice, the occasions for the exercise of the *governors'* special powers are practically certain to be far more numerous than the authors of the Report expected.

Let us now see what all this means. Ignoring, for a moment, the suggested emergency controls by the Governor, the Governor-General, and the Secretary of State, we shall have in each of the eight major provinces of India a sovereign legislature. It is of the first importance that this fact should be realised. Within the province all administration is to be in the hands of a cabinet, jointly responsible to the legislature. Yet it is suggested that ultimate control over the actions of these legislatures and of the ministries responsible to them should be exercised by executive authorities responsible to nothing, except, ultimately, and at three removes, to Parliament. It is enough to state the matter in this bald fashion to raise the very gravest doubts as to the workability of a scheme dependent on the functioning of such an arrangement. But let us carry our examination a little farther.

Suppose that a responsible provincial cabinet passes a measure through the legislature dealing with a matter in which public feeling or material interests are very deeply engaged, and that the measure is disallowed by the Governor, acting under the authority of the Governor-General and the Secretary of State. Such a measure might be concerned with finance, military training in schools and colleges (a subject very close to the hearts of many Indian politicians), recruitment to the all-India services (in spite of the removal of these from popular control), or with a hundred and one other subjects. Can it be expected that the legislature and ministry will accept the Governor's control? The ministry would resign and would be almost automatically returned to power, if necessary, as the result of a general election. And what then? There is the

statutory power of the Governor to administer the province without Ministers. But does anybody suppose that that power could be exercised? How could the taxes be collected, and to what heights could agitation not be raised? These and other equally weighty questions crowd at once into the mind. Let it be clearly understood, once and for all, that controls such as the Report visualised will break in the hands of those who try to use them. Of course the Government could be carried on by force, but for how long? Sooner or later, and, obviously, sooner rather than later, a settlement on constitutional lines would have to be made, and the character of the settlement could never for a moment be in doubt. Behind the ministries and legislatures would be the sanction of such popular will as exists in India, but the Governor and the Governor-General would be devoid of such sanction.

Again, all experience leads to the irresistible belief that when such a deadlock occurs in one province, the trouble will speedily spread to other provinces and to the centre. And there is this further important consideration. India is a creature of communications, particularly railway communications, and there are provinces in which such grave trouble as we are contemplating as the outcome of a clash between the provincial legislature and the higher controlling authorities could paralyse the whole system of communications and thereby imperil not only the welfare but the very lives of people all over India. And if, as would certainly happen, the trouble spread, the danger would be increased and magnified. Here, then, we are face to face with a fundamental objection to the scheme contained in the Simon Report, for legislatures

of the kind, and with the powers suggested for the provinces, will simply not fit into the bureaucratic framework visualised. And the word bureaucratic is here used in its literal sense. It is not used as a term of depreciation.

The object of the Commission in suggesting the grant of autonomy to the provinces whilst retaining executive and Parliamentary control higher up is a praiseworthy one. It is to enable 'each of the provinces to evolve by a process of growth and development the form of executive and legislative machinery most suited to it,' and 'to afford to Indians the opportunity of judging by experiment in the provincial sphere how far the British system of Parliamentary government is fitted to their needs and to the natural genius of the people.' It is to do all this, whilst ensuring the safety of the whole country through a strong Central Government withdrawn from popular control and imposing its will when necessary on the provincial ministries and legislatures. But the attainment of this object is not possible by means of the scheme contained in the Report.

The reaction of India to the Report was instantaneous and unambiguous. Practically all the Hindu parties or sections of thought rejected the Report because it gave real responsibility neither at the centre nor in the provinces. All but small fractions of the minority communities were quite prepared to accept the proposals for the Central Government, but the Moslems disliked the proposed form of provincial Government, and complained that the Report met practically none of the claims which they had put forward from time to time. The Sikhs also were dissatisfied with the

arrangements proposed for them in the Punjab, and for these various reasons the opposition to the Report in India was almost unanimous. Apologists for the Report have said that the proposal to hold the Round Table Conference and the declaration regarding dominion status as the ultimate goal of India's political progress were responsible for its fate in India. All that has been said in the previous chapters refutes this argument, as it is quite clear that the proposals, in one way or another, fall far short of the demands of even moderate political opinion in India. In India, Lord Irwin had taken the extreme step a year earlier of postponing the General Election which fell due at the end of 1929. He had the power to do this, and he took this very grave step with the deliberate intention of giving the Commission's Report a fair field, for by the beginning of 1929 the Congress Party and other sections of boycotters had made it clear that they were going to fight the election on the platform of 'boycott the Simon Report'. We have seen enough of the state of affairs and opinion in India to realise that an election fought on this issue would have been quite literally fatal to the Report as far as India was concerned, because it must be remembered that, apart from some Moslems and Justice Party men, nobody could have been found to oppose the cry, and a legislative assembly and provincial councils would have been returned with overwhelming majorities of members pledged in advance to have nothing to do with the Report. By postponing the elections for a year Lord Irwin gave the Report a chance to make its way on its own merits. The reasons for its lack of success in India we have seen. Partly they are inherent

in the Report, and partly they arise out of the chaotic conditions of Indian affairs when the Report appeared

But the opposition to the Report had the paradoxical effect of re-establishing the Round Table Conference in favour with those Indian leaders whom the developments of the last few months had caused to waver. In their hearts they were heartily tired of civil disobedience and its dread accompaniments. The more clear-sighted saw that the growth of licence and anarchy and the debauching of youth and the ignorant masses, which were its inevitable accompaniments, contained seeds of great and permanent danger for the country. Mr. Gandhi's doctrine of mere non-cooperation with the Government had long lost any attraction which it might have had for these men, who were anxious to push forward with constructive work. The leaders of the minority communities were eager to seize the opportunity presented by the Conference to put their case for protection prominently before the British people and the world, and, gradually, the eyes of all except the Congress leaders turned towards the Conference, which offered a chance, at any rate, of a solution of community troubles, and of persuading Parliament, through discussions with its chosen representatives face to face, that the Simon Report would not do. They argued that it had left out of consideration one vital term in the Indian political equation, namely, Indian Nationalist aspirations and their justification, and this term they hoped that they could insert at the Conference with the happy result that the equation would then be worked out. October, therefore, saw representatives of all shades of Indian



opinion and interests, except official Congress representatives, assembled in London, waiting for the opening of the most fateful passage hitherto recorded in the annals of the relations between Britain and India.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CONFERENCE OPENS

FOR the next few months the history of India is written in London. Mr. Gandhi and many of his chief associates were still in jail, but few eyes were on him now. All were turned towards the new, exciting drama opening in the capital of the Empire. During the summer eleventh-hour attempts had been made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar to arrange a compromise between the Congress organisation and the Government, which would enable Mr. Gandhi to get once more into personal touch with Lord Irwin, and, conceivably, take part in the proceedings of the Conference. Lord Irwin gave his assent and encouragement to the efforts of these two Indian leaders, but Mr. Gandhi was not inclined to accept the sort of compromise which would be agreeable to the Government of India, and the attempt, in consequence, fell through. But, in spite of the absence of official delegates from the Congress, and of one or two notable sympathisers like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a strong and able delegation, numbering about eighty, had gathered in London to represent the cause, or, more accurately, the causes of India. It should be clearly understood that the Indian delegates to the Round Table Conference were not there to speak with one voice for India as a whole. They were there to represent Indian States, this or that community or interest, and so on.

Two or three of the great Liberal leaders, like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, and Mr Sastri, and Sir A P Patro and Mr Ramaswamy Mudaliyar of the Justice Party, were anxious to speak simply as Indians and not as Hindus or as members of any other party, and men like these would have had no difficulty in coming to a statesmanlike solution of the minorities problem with the great Moslem leaders like His Highness the Aga Khan and the late Sir Muhammad Shafi, who, whilst determined to safeguard all the legitimate interests of their community, were determined to do so because they knew that without a solution which Moslems and other minorities believed to be equitable there could be no lasting peace and no great political progress in India. But most of the delegates were charged with the representation of special interests, and this implies no disparagement of any sort because the existing conditions in the country render it inevitable and necessary that Indian representation should be on this basis. It is of the most vital importance that this point should be clearly understood. The Round Table Conference had a triple objective. First, it had to try to unite all the communities and interests of British India on the basis of mutual agreements and compromises, so that British India could be treated as one political entity for which constitutional arrangements could be devised appropriate to the place which it was to occupy in the scheme for All-India. Next, it had to come to some arrangement between British India and the Indian States, so as to provide a sure foundation for whatever scheme might be devised for All India. And, lastly, the relations between India as a whole and Great Britain,

and the position of All-India in the British Commonwealth, had to be settled. Unless this multiple objective of the Conference is understood its proceedings and results cannot be properly appreciated. Had Mr Gandhi and one or two other Congress leaders been present, the claim of the Conference to be completely representative of all the interests of India could not have been challenged by anybody. At the second session of the Conference which began in September 1931, Mr Gandhi did attempt to challenge the representative character of the composition of the Indian delegates to the previous session, but the swift and devastating refutation of his argument by Sir Muhammad Shafi and Dr Ambedkar, the latter speaking for the Depressed Classes, killed his contention, and, incidentally, shows in most illuminating fashion the absolute impossibility of choosing the Indian delegates except on the basis of community and other interests as described above.

On 12th November 1930 the Conference was opened in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords by a speech from His Majesty in person. The occasion was worthy of its historic setting, for something more, even, than a Conference to discuss the mighty issue of the future of nearly one fifth of the human race was taking place. East and West, Asia and Europe, were meeting for the first time in amity, on terms of equality, to discuss peacefully, and with the hope and intention of reaching agreement, questions far greater and far more important than many which, in the past, had led to war and conquest on one side or the other. Subjects, British and Indian, of one King, and his vassals in the shape of the Indian Princes, had met, in effect, to take

the first step in the grand process, pregnant with the most vital importance for the future of the whole human race, of reconciling race and race, colour and colour. Whatever the ultimate outcome of the Round Table Conference may be, this process has been begun and assuredly it must be carried through to its appointed end, by us and by others. And, that nothing should be lacking to complete the truly epoch-making character of the gathering in the Royal Gallery, among those who heard the King address the Conference were Prime Ministers and other representatives of the British self-governing dominions overseas. For them, the men of British or kindred races, the great task to which England has set her hand in India has been accomplished, and their presence on that historic day was a token of sympathy, no less strong because it was necessarily mute, and a silent assurance and encouragement to the Indians that they also could walk along a path, if it lay in them to do so, which had been blazed and trodden by the pioneer fathers of the British colleagues who were sitting at the table with them and of the distinguished dominion statesmen who were watching them.

'I shall follow the course of your proceedings,' said the King, 'with the closest and most sympathetic interest, not indeed without anxiety but with a greater confidence. The material conditions which surround the lives of my subjects in India affect me nearly, and will be ever present in your thoughts during your forthcoming deliberations. I have also in mind the just claims of majorities and minorities, of men and women, of town dwellers and tillers of the soil, of landlords and tenants, of the strong and the weak, of

the rich and the poor, of the races, castes and creeds of which the body politic is composed. For these things I care deeply. I cannot doubt that the true foundation of self-government is in the fusion of such divergent claims into mutual obligations and in their recognition and fulfilment. It is my hope that the future government of India based on this foundation will give expression to her honourable aspirations.' A few very short speeches from the Prime Minister and half a dozen Indian representatives followed, and the delegates dispersed into the kindly omen of a bright November sun, for even the English climate was friendly, like the big crowd which had gathered outside the door.

The serious work began a week later with the general discussion of the field to be covered at the Conference, and, right at the outset, the gaps between the three objectives of the Conference were narrowed. For Indian spokesmen all round the Table announced that their ambition for India's future was that she should become a federation of All-India, British India and the Indian States together. One or two delegates hung back for a time, notably Mr. Sastri, but in the end Indian opinion became unanimous. The British delegates were no less ready to accept this ideal, because the value, from every point of view, of the inclusion of the Indian States in organic union with British India was apparent. Also, the Indian delegates, including the Princes, made it quite clear that the basis of the All-India Federation should be responsible self-government, and, ultimately, dominion status. Naturally, the claim for immediate dominion status was made by some delegates, but, on the whole,

speeches were cautious, and responsible speakers realised and admitted tacitly, if not openly, that there were certain necessary stages to be gone through before the Constitution of India could be the same as that of any one of the self-governing Dominions. The general discussion at which the ideal of an All-India Federation was put forth relieved the minds of many well-wishers of the Conference, both in India and elsewhere, of a great apprehension. For it had been feared, and, indeed, rumours had circulated to the effect, that certain of the delegates meant to create an impasse at the outset by demanding that the work of the Conference should proceed on the assumption that a scheme for dominion status for India, with, perhaps, one or two temporary safeguards, should emerge at the end of the discussions. Such a head-on collision would have been fatal to the whole Conference, for not one of the three British parties represented would have accepted such an ultimatum. Happily, such a narrow conception of their responsibilities had not entered the heads of any of the Indian delegates, and the mere clash that was feared was replaced by the broad, noble, and infinitely fruitful conception of federation. Further, from the moment the idea of All-India Federation was broached, the problem of British India itself changed materially, for, what might be dangerous in the case of the smaller unit, could be safely agreed to for the bigger unit. The British delegates, therefore, found, so to speak, better cards in their hand than they had expected, and the Indian delegates also found their own bargaining powers extended and their arguments strengthened for precisely the same reason, namely, the inclusion in the proposed scheme of the strong, stable,

princely element. Decidedly, the Conference was opening well.

But these were not the only circumstances favouring the Conference. By a rare stroke of fortune there was nothing very much to distract the attention of the public in Great Britain or India from the proceedings which were now being carried on in St. James's Palace, and the dramatic inauguration of the discussions, with its prospect of a new, powerful and unique federation within the British Commonwealth of Nations could not fail to arouse and retain interest in England in the absence of any powerful counter-attractions such as, unfortunately, were to be only too common during the second session of the Conference.

The English press, almost without exception, behaved in a way worthy of the dignity and vital importance of this historic occasion, and presented full, knowledgeable, and fair accounts of the proceedings and of the delegates. The Indian representatives speedily found themselves in a distinctly friendly atmosphere, and the self-restraint and sense of responsibility which they brought to bear upon their work were encouraged and strengthened by the attitude of the English press and of the English people. In India the lull in political activity and excitement which had marked the departure of the delegates to the Conference continued. Even Congressmen were watching the drama now being played out in London and, it is quite obvious, whilst loudly protesting that they expected nothing to come of it, actually were hoping and, it may be, expecting a good deal. The long-looked-for despatch of the Government of India on the Simon Report, disappointing



though it was to most Indians, no matter what their party affiliations were, did not give rise to any considerable excitement, for it was generally felt that, like the Simon Report, it, too, was part of the material upon which the Conference would work and was no more than one opinion—a peculiarly important and authoritative one, of course—on the main question before the Conference. Briefly, the Government of India despatch did not depart very widely from the proposals of the Simon Commission. It is true that it proposed certain alterations in the Viceroy's Executive Council, of which the most notable was that three of its members should be chosen from among the elected members of the Indian Legislature, so as to bring the Government and public opinion more closely into touch with each other. Its proposals regarding minority claims and safeguards were detailed, but did not satisfy the people concerned.

It is difficult to understand why the Government of India should have put forward such an inadequate and, on the whole, timorous document as this. Lord Irwin's own policy was undoubtedly directed towards much wider immediate objectives than those contained in the despatch, and one naturally asks the reason why a State paper of this importance emanating from his Government did not bear more clearly the impress and show more practically the influence of the views of the head of the Government. The student of Indian politics can only suppose that unexpected strength to oppose more liberal proposals developed inside the Council, which is naturally, on the whole, a very conservative body, and that the despatch represents the maximum amount of common agreement obtainable. However

that may be, the despatch did not provide either a rallying-point even for moderate Indian opinion at the Conference or a clear lead to the British Government and the British delegates. At any rate, the despatch plainly showed the need for the inclusion in the Government of India of the three elected members of the Legislature as suggested by it.

The discussions in St. James's Palace proceeded, and the delegates grappled with the vast problem of the delimitation of federal and non-federal subjects. There was little of the dramatic now, for the talk was all of details of administration. Naturally, the British India representatives wanted the federal field to be as wide as possible, and, just as naturally, the Princes wanted to be careful in everything they did. They were by no means all of one mind. The Maharaja of the little State of Rewa was robustly Conservative, while Sir Mirza Ismail, representing the great progressive State of Mysore, with a long history of constitutional progress and social and economic development behind it, found himself, like his colleague Sir Akbar Hydari, who represented the biggest of all the Indian States, Hyderabad, in the position to take a more comprehensive and philosophic view of the problem as it affected All-India than were most of the other princely representatives. But these two had very definite limits beyond which they were not prepared to go, as, also, had the other two great protagonists of the All-India federation among the Princes, namely, the Maharaja of Bikanir and the Nawab of Bhopal. These two Princes were the official spokesmen of a large number of the members of the Chamber of Princes, and their views approximated, on the whole, very closely to those

of Sir Akbar Hydari and Sir Mirza Ismail. In between them and the conservative element among the Princes come some of the more important rulers like the Maharaja of Patiala, and the Jamsahib of Nawanagar, who has long been an Imperial hero under the affectionate title of 'Ranjit'. These, whilst seeing the desirability, and, also, the necessity for an All-India Federation, nevertheless intended to see clearly the extent and significance of every step which they took towards its consummation. This side of the work of the Conference was entrusted to a large and very powerful sub-committee, presided over by Lord Sankey and known as the Federal Structure Sub-Committee. If its results in the last analysis seem somewhat inconclusive, and even meagre assuredly this is no fault of the men composing the sub-committee. It is due to the quite unique difficulty and amazing complexity of the task assigned to them. The sub-committee was trying to lay down the basis of a Federal Constitution for over three hundred and fifty million people living in a great sub-continent of nearly two million square miles in extent, divided among some hundreds of different ruling authorities, embracing a large number of races and communities, and nearly all stages of civilisation. The problem has only to be put in this bald fashion to enable its vast scope and well-nigh insuperable difficulty to be understood. It took Australia and Canada with their—comparatively speaking—microscopically small populations and infinitely simpler problems, long years of effort and negotiation to attain federation, and the experience of the United States of America was the same. At first sight, therefore, there may seem something of unreality

in the spectacle of less than a hundred men sitting round a table in London, trying to come to agreement within a short space of a few weeks on the essentials of such a federation for such a country six thousand miles away. But there was no unreality in the proceedings themselves, and, whatever may be the outcome of this particular Conference, the first steps towards the All-India Federation have been at any rate explored. Before the Federal Structure Sub-Committee concluded its labours at this first session of the Round Table Conference it had at any rate been able to draw up a tentative sketch of a scheme of division of powers between the Federation and the various units of which it would be composed. The structure and constitution of the Federal Legislature were discussed, but, of course, no definite principles or suggestions were able to be laid down.

No less than eight other sub-committees were set up to discuss problems relating to the provincial Constitution, to minority safeguards, the separation of Burma from India, the separation of Sind from Bombay, the future form of government in the North-West Frontier Province, the franchise, defence, and the Imperial services. The work of these sub-committees led to a good deal of agreement between the different Indian communities and between the Indian and British representatives on many matters of the highest importance. For various reasons, public opinion in England and elsewhere tended to regard the work of the Round Table Conference as conterminous with that of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, and, in consequence, there has been a good deal of misconception as to the amount of work accomplished. Of course,

some of the most important problems arising out of the subjects with which these other sub-committees were dealing were left unsettled, but, nevertheless, the bulk of the work which they had tackled was quite definitely cleared out of the way. Nobody except the most ardent had expected a clear-cut solution of the Indian problem to emerge from the work of the Round Table Conference at this first session, and, on the whole, as far as technical constitutional questions were concerned, the Conference did as much as might reasonably be demanded of it at this preliminary session.

But behind the scenes there had been a vast amount of active work going on which finds no place in the official records of the proceedings, but which was not less important than that of which the Government Blue books tell us. Most of the British Indian delegates had come to England with two great hopes. One was that they would be able to achieve a step towards dominion status for India, long enough and definite enough to justify to their countrymen their action in coming to England. The second was that they would at last be able to find some solution for the vexed question of the minorities problem.

The most important work of any conference is done outside the walls of the room in which it meets, and the Indian Round Table Conference was no exception to this rule. Quite one of the most valuable results of the Conference—it may be absolutely the most valuable—was the friendly contact established between British and Indian delegates of all shades of opinion. Each one of the British delegates probably met all his Indian colleagues personally and received from them a

vast amount of valuable if often confusing information. At one time, there was some idea that relations between the British Conservative delegates and some of the Indian delegates were not so cordial or so close as those of their other British colleagues. This is emphatically not true. Many of the Indian delegates already knew Lord Peel and Lord Zetland personally, since the one had been Secretary of State for India, and the other had been Governor of Bengal, an office which Lord Zetland, as is well known, had held with the greatest success. And neither Sir Samuel Hoare nor Major Stanley were unknown or could be regarded as reactionaries by anybody. In a word, it was so obvious that the Conservative delegation were studying the situation with an open mind that none of the Indian delegates ever dreamed of accusing them of bias, secret or open. They knew that these particular Members of Parliament were Conservatives, but Conservatives are by no means rare in India, and in an Indian Parliament, modelled on the lines of our own and functioning in a self-governing India, most of the Indian delegates to the Conference would find themselves in an Indian Conservative Party. But, of course, it cannot be denied that the main hopes of Indian reformers centred in the Liberal and Labour representatives. Throughout the Conference there was a good deal of liaison between all the British delegates, but, as time went on, it became more and more clear that the key position was held by the Liberals. This was inevitable, first because of the quite extraordinary personal prestige of the Liberal leader, Lord Reading, the late Viceroy of India, which had been enhanced by his work in the Conference, and, also, because of the natural strength

of the middle position in a matter where compromise is the essence of success. Lord Lothian, Sir Robert Hamilton and Mr Foot, Lord Reading's Liberal colleagues, were all men of affairs, the first two of whom had had considerable practical experience of Empire affairs overseas, whilst Mr Foot quickly and naturally assumed the position of 'Member for the Depressed Classes'. By the policy of their party, and by their own personal temperament, they were men who were prepared to go as far forward as circumstances warranted, and their natural bias was towards reform rather than a mere stabilisation of the *status quo*. The members of the Labour Party delegation were in exactly the same position. Three out of six had been Liberals before joining the Labour Party, and the remaining three belonged to the Right Wing of the Labour Movement. The policy of the first Labour administration in 1924 in foreign and Imperial affairs had shown that there was no fundamental difference between them and the Liberals in the principles upon which their policy was based. Partly owing to the fact that every member of the Labour delegation was also a member of the Government of the day and, undoubtedly, to some extent because of Lord Reading's pre-eminent knowledge of Indian affairs and his display from the outset of the traditional Liberal characteristics, the Labour delegation took comparatively little part in the discussions in the Federal Structure Sub-Committee. As time went on, it became more and more clear that Lord Reading and his colleagues held the key position. The Government obviously could not embark on any policy which the Liberals refused to support, because they and the Conservatives

together could overthrow it. Similarly, the Conservatives were powerless without the help of the Liberals. In the end, the stage was reached at which, to all intents, the Government was waiting for a lead from the Liberals. Their hopes were realised, for, towards the end of this first session of the Conference it had become clear that there were important differences of opinion between the Liberal and the Conservative delegates, not so much in regard to the final outcome of Indian political progress or the goal towards which the progress should be directed, but, rather, in respect to immediate policy, and still more in respect to the general method of approach to the solution of the Indian problem and to the point of view from which it should be regarded. Lord Reading and his colleagues, after surveying the position in the light of what they had heard around the Conference table, and as the result of numerous detailed enquiries from individual Indian delegates and other representatives of the various sections of opinion, both British and Indian, in India, came ultimately to the conclusion that the right policy was to go as far as possible to meet reasonable Indian aspirations whilst insisting on certain irreducible safeguards which they believed to be necessary in the interests of India as well as of Britain to ensure stable and good government in a self-governing India. In a word, Lord Reading and his Liberal colleagues decided that the time had come when India should advance to responsible self-government, limited only by certain necessary safeguards which they were prepared to define.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, tended to lay the greatest stress on the safety side of the new Constitu-



tion, and were not prepared to give their decision regarding responsible self-government for India until the complete plan for the proposed Constitution for India could be laid before them, when they would be able to see exactly under what conditions a responsible Indian Government would function. Their attitude has been much misunderstood both in this country and in India. Not one of the Conservative delegates ever said anything in the Conference in opposition to responsible self-government for India when certain conditions have been fulfilled. Only they would not assent even provisionally to the grant of responsible self-government until they could be assured that those conditions were, in fact, fulfilled.

But all this time the work of the Federal Structure Committee had been drawing to its climax. The formal details of separation of powers between the Federal Government and its constituent units, and such discussion as was possible about the structure of the legislatures and the representation of the various interests therein had come to an end, and the Conference and India and this country were waiting to hear what the decision was to be about the great question which had been at the back of everybody's mind all through, that is, what degree of responsibility was to be given to the Federal Government of India when it came into existence. From time to time during the earlier discussions in the Conference this question had come almost to the surface, and there were hot-heads who would have put it prematurely. But the wiser counsellors present restrained them and waited for it to emerge, as it must emerge ultimately, inevitably and naturally. There was a barely perceptible

adjournment for Christmas, and the Round Table Conference reassembled amid the fogs of the dying December in London, hoping that at last a light was going to be lit which would disperse for ever the darkness which of late years has fallen over the relations between India and Britain. On 2nd January Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, speaking on behalf of all the responsible progressive elements of Indian political opinion, lit the spark, and on 5th January Lord Reading fanned it into flame. In effect, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru said, 'Give us responsible self-government at the Centre and we will agree to any reasonable limitations which you can show to be necessary not only in our interests but in yours also.' His speech occupied the greater part of the sitting for one day, and in it Sir Tej expounded a detailed scheme of responsible self-government for an All-India Federation with provisions for safeguards of a kind which reasonable opinion in England would demand and reasonable opinion in India would accept. This was on Friday, and when the Federal Structure Sub-Committee next met, on the following Monday morning, Sir Muhammad Shafi, the chief spokesman of the Moslem delegation, showed that he and his colleagues were at one with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as regards the main question of the status to be allotted to the All-India Federal Government. When he sat down, Lord Reading rose to make what was undoubtedly the most important pronouncement of the Conference, except only that contained in the Prime Minister's statement of policy which ended the proceedings on 19th January. A few preliminary remarks and then Lord Reading went straight to the heart of his subject. 'The time has now

come,' he said, 'when, speaking on behalf of the Liberal delegation, I should inform the members of this Committee where we stand as a Liberal Party' Slowly, and speaking for the most part as dispassionately as a judge on the Bench, Lord Reading reviewed the spirit and the proceedings of the Conference, the problem on which the delegates sitting round the Table were engaged and the basic conditions of India herself Then, at last, came the moment for which all the Indian delegates had been waiting with painful eagerness, when they knew that the English Liberal Party was prepared to agree to the creation of a responsible Federal Government in India, subject to certain safeguards which Lord Reading set out clearly and in detail These safeguards referred to defence, foreign relations, finance, to European interests, and to secure the all important maintenance of law and order There was a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm when he sat down, and the feelings of the Indian delegates were crystallised in a sentence by Mr Jayakar, the Maharashtra and former Congress leader, when he said, 'If only all my countrymen could have heard every word that Lord Reading said there would be complete confidence in India from now onwards' Only Mr Sastri seemed to be doubtful His own ardent and generous mind was a little chilled by the strong emphasis which Lord Reading had laid on the necessity for safeguards, and in the speech with which he followed Lord Reading he allowed his disappointment to be seen This was only his first impression, and later his point of view altered materially

*The Conservative view was put by Sir Samuel Hoare the next day in the unavoidable absence of the leader*

of the Conservative delegation, Lord Peel Sir Samuel found himself unable to agree with the previous speakers, but his speech, unwelcome though its contents were to the Indian delegates, achieved the *tour de force* of enhancing the speaker's reputation and popularity through its very frankness and sincerity. He scorned to wrap up his meaning, however unpalatable, in any ambiguity, and showed with almost painful directness the conditions of the problem as they appeared to a British Conservative. He did not say that on no account and in no conditions would he ever agree to a particular scheme, but that his final answer would be greatly influenced by comprehensive and complete proposals coming from a willing India.

The three speeches of Lord Reading, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Muhammad Shafi represent something far more than a measure of agreement on certain points, vitally important though these are. They are the turning point in the relations between Great Britain and India, comparable in importance to Lord Irwin's announcement that dominion status was the natural issue of India's political development. After these speeches we can never return to the old conditions. Responsible self government on certain conditions, with a Federal Government for all India, stands as the policy, and no hesitation and no doubts can remove it. Within these three days in St. James's Palace the light had been kindled for which so many had been looking for so long. It is flickering in a strong gale in these days, but if it is quenched it will not be by the actions of the British people. All over the world, and particularly in India, these events were acclaimed with the enthusiasm and invested with the importance

which belonged to them by right. The Government of Great Britain had got the lead in its future Indian policy, for which it had legitimately hoped as the outcome of the Round Table Conference, and, away in India, Lord Irwin saw his policy, for which he had worked so hard and endured so much, accepted and acclaimed by the vast majority of Indians and vindicated by his own countrymen, amongst whom was his immediate predecessor.

This is the light of the Conference. But there is also the shade. Side by side with the extra-mural contacts between the Indian delegates and their British colleagues and other British leaders of political and public life there had been going on constant contacts and conferences between the leaders of the majority and minority communities in an earnest endeavour to find some solution of the minorities problem. Nobody knew better than the Indian delegates themselves how very intractable the problem was, and they could hardly hope to solve it finally and in all its parts during these few weeks. But as the slow discussions in the Federal Structure Sub-Committee dragged their length along, the urgency of finding some sort of a solution, even if it were only an intermediate one, forced itself with ever increasing weight on their minds. Naturally, the Aga Khan, as the principal Moslem leader, became the centre of informal meetings between representatives of the Hindu and various minority communities, and for weeks hope that an agreement would be reached ebbed and flowed. Even the vexed *question of communal electorates* seemed at one time likely to be answered by ingenious devices proposed both from the Hindu and the Moslem side, but always

the inaugurators came up against the hard, intractable core of the problem, namely, the perpetuation by statute of the Moslem majorities in the Councils of the Punjab and Bengal, and, with it, the virtual power of control over the administration of those two provinces. Here, the Moslems were met with unyielding opposition from Dr Moonje, representing the All India Hindu Mahasabha, and from Sirdar Ujjal Singh and Sirdar Sampuran Singh, the two Sikh representatives. Both these gentlemen are Sikhs of land-owning stock, and the military history of British India has proved that in rear-guard actions or defensive fighting the Sikhs can be as stubborn as any soldiers on earth. In the discussions which increased in heat and bitterness as time went on the two Sirdars displayed this traditional quality of their race to its full extent. Armed with a mandate from practically every one of the representative Sikh bodies in the Punjab they regarded themselves as trustees for the interests of their people, and nothing would make them yield an inch. Dr Moonje also belongs to a people—the Mahrattas—who were in the act of disputing the overlordship of All-India with the Moghuls when Lord Lake put an end to their ambitions outside Delhi at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The prospect of a fight, physical or verbal, never caused Dr Moonje any trepidation, and he crystallised his objections to certain of the Moslem claims in the flashing phrase, 'Communal electorates are bad enough, but communal provinces would be the death-blow to Indian nationalism.' The Moslems, on the other hand, were themselves armed with a mandate which had been repeatedly affirmed by fully representative gatherings of their people, and

their delegates too were all men of fighting races who have made a good deal of the history of Asia and Europe. In its own way and on its own scale this clash of rival communal claims in London was a lively foretaste of the infinitely greater and sterner clash of another kind which would ensue if the fighting races of India should ever be left to settle among themselves by means of the instrument on which they have chiefly relied through all their history, namely, the sword.

Mr MacDonald took the deepest personal interest in these negotiations, invited leading representatives of the various communities to Chequers, and, towards the end of the first session, when it looked as though everything was hastening to a deadlock, he kept them hour after hour in a room at St James's Palace, hoping that somehow or other the interests of All India would prevail over sectional interests. The Prime Minister's action and that of Lords Reading and Sankey, Sir Samuel Hoare, Mr Wedgwood Benn and others who, at this time, all played a great part in assuaging passions and performing various friendly offices, are in themselves sufficient refutation of the old and still current libel that the British Government deliberately encourages inter communal dissension. But it was all in vain. Not even the powerful aid of these influential British statesmen or the zealous efforts of the Maharaja of Bikanir, the Nawab of Bhopal, Sir Akbar Hydari, Sir Mirza Ismail and others of the Indian States delegation in the same direction could avail to bring about any solution. Right up to the last moment of the Conference the discussions went on, and on the *very morning when it came to be adjourned sine die*, the Prime Minister and his British colleagues, the

Princes and other delegates from India waited in the great drawing-room at St. James's Palace while, a few feet away in a smaller room, the chief communal leaders decided finally that they could find no basis of agreement on the fundamental matters in issue between them. The hour for the presentation of the Minority Committee's Report struck, but still no word came from the other room, and those waiting around the great table wondered if, even at this ultimate moment, the long hoped-for agreement was coming. Their hopes were dashed when the leaders filed into the drawing-room with downcast mien and announced what the waiting delegates had already perceived—that this last Conference had proved abortive.

All the threads of the Conference were drawn together in the Prime Minister's final speech in adjourning the Conference on 19th January. There is no need to traverse its contents, for they are all summed up in the two sentences:

'The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights. . . . With a Legislature constituted on a federal basis, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to recognise the principle of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature.'

The delegates, for the last time, went out in high heart and with great hopes for the future. All the



practical constructive work of the All-India Federal Constitution was still to be done, but during these weeks in London many ideas and opinions had been altered and magic words had been spoken. Most, if not all, of the Indian representatives felt that they could go back to India with something to show to their countrymen to justify the trust that had been reposed in them. And so, once again, the scene shifts back to India, and again the two chief characters come on to the stage—Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi.

## CHAPTER XIII

### VICEROY AND MAHATMA

THE Indian delegates arrived back in their country to find the situation there about to be marvellously transformed. Mr. Gandhi and thousands of his followers, big and small, who had been imprisoned during the course of the civil disobedience movement were soon to come out of jail, civil disobedience itself was to be suspended, and the conversations between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi—the two Mahatmas, as certain hostile newspapers with sneering intent called them—about to begin. From these conversations was to result a pact which brought peace to a distracted country for nearly a year, which strengthened the Indian representation at the Round Table Conference, and brought the settlement of age-old disputes of all kinds within the bounds of possibility, if only certain of the leading figures—but especially Mr. Gandhi—in England and in India had been able to use the occasion presented to them in this almost miraculous fashion. Yet, even into this soothing talk of peace there broke a harsh, menacing discord. In the very week in which some of the delegates reached their homes from England, Hindu-Moslem riots in Benares started on 12th February a series of bloody clashes in the United Provinces, involving great and ancient towns like Agra and Mirzapore, and culminating in the unspeakable abomination of the Cawnpur

massacre. The outbreak in Kashmir and the results which have followed in the train of all these events, it may be, have put off a full and permanent settlement of Hindu-Moslem claims and counter-claims for years. It seems impossible, indeed, that the settlement can ever be reached by the present generation.

But in the early days of February the shadow of Cawnpur had not fallen across the land and the focus of attention was Delhi, where Lord Irwin had already decided to enter into personal conversations with Mr. Gandhi. India was not unprepared for the decision, for, opening the Delhi session of the Indian Legislature on 17th January, Lord Irwin entered on a specific discussion of Mr. Gandhi's motives and ideals and said, 'Is it not now possible, I would ask, for those responsible for this policy to try another course that in the light, on the one hand, of the sinister events in India, and on the other of the encouragement offered to India by the progress of the Conference in England, would seem to be a more excellent way?'

The way to the meeting between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi was made fairly plain, partly by Mr. Gandhi himself and partly by the Round Table delegates arriving from England. Mr. Gandhi undoubtedly came out of jail more disposed to seek a peaceful settlement with the Government than when he went in, and he took command of the discussions in the Working Committee of Congress when the question was being thrashed out there during the first fortnight in February. Fortunately, while the Working Committee's discussions were going on a large party of delegates arrived from England, and some of the more prominent of them, including Their Highnesses the

Maharajas of Bikanir and Alwar, as well as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other Liberal leaders and Sir A P Patro of the Justice Party, issued a robust manifesto to their countrymen pointing out in the clearest language possible the extent and reality of the progress achieved in London. Further, some of them went on immediately to Allahabad, where the Congress Committee was sitting, to describe what had happened in England and to persuade, if possible, the Committee to try, at any rate once, the methods of peace instead of violent agitation. Their arguments were backed by the evident impatience of the older Congress men and of Indian business circles generally with civil disobedience.

Accordingly, on 17th February, 'the half-naked fakir,' as Mr Churchill picturesquely described Mr Gandhi, strode up the broad staircase between the towering troopers of the Viceroy's bodyguard to meet Lord Irwin. It was a very weighty decision that the Viceroy had taken when he announced his willingness to enter into conversations with Mr Gandhi, and, it cannot be denied that from the point of view of tactics Mr Gandhi and Congress scored distinctly. There was dismay in many quarters in India and in England when it became known that Lord Irwin was actually in conversation with the arch-rebel against British government in India, the man who, only a few weeks ago, had been in prison for actions of which the avowed purpose was the overthrow of the British power. Non-official European opinion in India was restrained, but, on the whole, disapproving. From the Right Wing of the Moslems came hot denunciation of what many of them believed was a betrayal of the loyal to the

disloyal elements, and a shattering blow to the prestige of the Government. In Bengal, even Mr A H Ghuznavi was moved to anger and denounced the Viceroy's action in public speeches. But this, after all, is only the short-period view of the matter, the tactics of one phase in a long and comprehensive campaign. From the strategical point of view it is clear, from what has been said in earlier chapters, that Lord Irwin was right. He had conceived and put into force a policy which, in his opinion, was the only policy adequate to the conditions of India. The policy had to be carried out in all its parts or it could not accomplish what its author hoped for. Its essence was the fullness and the permanence of the solution which it offered to India's political problem, and no matter what opinion may be held in this matter, it is perfectly clear that no solution will work which is not only boycotted but actively and bitterly opposed by that enormous section of Indian opinion included in or allied to the All-India National Congress. Also, it is not generally known that some of the leading Princes, whose loyalty and jealousy for the prestige of the British Crown are beyond all question, strongly urged Lord Irwin to enter into personal negotiation with Mr Gandhi. But of course Lord Irwin was taking immense risks. He might, to carry on our military analogy, lose a battle and sacrifice a part of his position for nothing. In other words, Lord Irwin had to come to an agreement with Congress through Mr Gandhi which would not only convert the Working Committee to his policy, and improve the situation in India, but, also, be approved by the British Government and reasonable opinion at home. At this juncture, Lord Irwin received support of incalculable

value from Mr Wedgwood Benn who, as a member of a minority Government, displayed great moral courage in supporting the Viceroy in a line of action which he knew would be deeply resented by a large, and even the major, portion of the strong Opposition in Parliament. Already, he had fallen foul of many of his own party on account of his support to Lord Irwin in the measures which the Government of India had found it necessary to take to suppress the illegal activities of Mr Gandhi's civil disobedience movement. At this critical moment, therefore, Lord Irwin found himself given a safe flank by the Secretary of State.

Eight times during the four weeks following 17th February did the 'half naked fakir' stride up the steps of the Viceroy's house, and, in between his interviews with Lord Irwin, he had one or two talks with the Home Secretary to the Government of India at which practical details of a settlement were discussed as well as Mr Gandhi's complaint against the way in which the provincial governments had handled the civil disobedience movement. Seven of the eight interviews with the Viceroy, however, took place between 17th February and 4th March, when the agreement, as finally decided upon, was drawn up. The talks between Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi were absolutely unconfined, no subject being barred from discussion. Lord Irwin, after making it clear to Mr Gandhi that any decisions that he might come to would have to comply with the fundamental position that India's political objective was an All India Federation with a responsible federal government limited by certain safeguards and reservations, said that the detailed application of the principles on which the federation was to be founded

could be discussed by Mr. Gandhi at the Round Table Conference. A great part of the conversations was occupied by discussion on the conduct of the police, on the limitations to be put on picketing, and on the operation of the Salt Laws. The question of the release of political prisoners came in for a good deal of discussion, but there the position was satisfactory on the whole, since persons who had been arrested during the civil disobedience campaign and had not been guilty of any violent crime were about to be released. Lord Irwin rightly refused to discuss the release of persons who had been sentenced for crimes of violence. From the outset, he also refused to consider the question of a general enquiry into alleged excesses by the police. The heroism and loyalty of all ranks of the Indian police throughout the troubles had been beyond all praise. Worked constantly to the limits of human endurance, in danger always, and subject to social pressure of a kind which inhabitants of Western countries can hardly imagine, the police had done their duty, and, quite literally, had stood between India and chaos. Of course, when they were fighting, as they often were fighting, with their backs to the wall and their lives at stake they had to take the measures necessary in such a desperate situation, and the capable spokesmen of the Congress Party could undoubtedly have produced incidents which, torn from their context and from the atmosphere of danger and strife in which they had occurred, would have shown the police in a bad light. But to describe these things as police excesses is a mere misuse of language. The police were doing work which it was their duty to do, and they were no more guilty of excesses than soldiers

British Government gained certain solid advantages. In the first place, it was arranged that civil disobedience should be effectively discontinued in all its illegal activities, and that steps would be taken for the participation of Congress representatives in the future discussions of the Round Table Conference. And not only would Congress representatives co-operate in the Conference, but they would do so on the condition that the Conference should discuss the political future of India on the basis of an All-India Federation, with responsibility for the Federal Government subject to reservations and safeguards in such matters as defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India and the discharge of obligations. Another of the great turning points in the agreement related to the politico economic boycott. In this, the trading interests of Great Britain, and particularly of the Lancashire textile industry, were deeply involved. Mr. Gandhi and his followers, conscious of the present and potential strength of this new weapon of theirs, were desperately anxious to retain freedom in its use. Lord Irwin and his Government, on the other hand, could not consent to the economic welfare of the whole country being used as a stake by one political party in a game in which other powerful parties and interests in the country opposed it. Close and tense were the arguments which passed between the Viceroy and the Congress leader, and, in the end, it was the Government of India's view which prevailed in essentials. The published statement in which the pact was embodied made it clear that the Government of India was itself pledged to the development of Indian industry and approved of all kinds of lawful means of



propaganda and stimulus. The boycott against foreign goods, however, had been directed primarily and almost entirely against British goods, and the object of this particular was purely political. It was agreed, therefore, that no compulsion should be applied to dealers and others who had made their living by trafficking in British or other foreign goods, but among the forms of propaganda on behalf of Indian-made goods peaceful picketing might be employed, provided it involved no aggression or coercion or intimidation.

On the whole, this was not an unsatisfactory solution of a very involved problem, although admittedly it would be hard to find a satisfactory definition of peaceful picketing, as other Governments in other parts of the world well know, and it could hardly be expected that no trouble would ever arise in future out of the activities of picketers. And, as a matter of fact, when Congress made its brief and unsuccessful attempt to restart civil disobedience at the end of 1931 and in the early days of 1932, picketing of shops and banks and other places of business immediately became one of the principal activities with which the Government had to deal.

So far, Lord Irwin had had the best of the bargain, and the remainder of the pact is concerned with the obligations which the Government of India took upon itself in return for those assumed by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. In the first place, the Government undertook to withdraw all the ordinances issued during the civil disobedience movement, except only one which concerned terrorist activities. During the unrest of 1930 a number of notifications declaring certain associations unlawful had been issued by the Govern-

ment, and now all these were to be withdrawn, as also were prosecutions relating to offences not involving violence which had been committed during the civil disobedience movement. Persons who were undergoing sentences of imprisonment for their activities during the disturbances were to be released, provided they had not been guilty of any crimes of violence. Only in Burma, where rebellion was actually raging in certain districts, was the concession regarding the notification of unlawful associations refused. Other concessions were made, in respect of fines imposed, movable goods seized and the location of punitive police during the unrest. In spite of Mr Gandhi's strong insistence on permission being given to people to manufacture salt freely the Government refused this concession, but said that certain administrative provisions already prevailing in certain places for the free manufacture of salt by local residents would be extended so as to give relief to the poorer classes.

Such, briefly, were the main provisions of the famous settlement. The balance of advantage is very clearly with the Indian Government as far as the practical points discussed between Lord Irwin and Mr Gandhi are concerned. But on the other hand Mr Gandhi had gained enormous prestige, and once again, as in the palmy days of his old non co operation movement, he found himself accompanied wherever he went by vast, cheering crowds. On the whole, it cannot be denied that he had done well out of his conversations. But so had the Government of India, for, like the announcement of 31st October 1929, the Settlement of 5th March 1931 produced an instantaneous and beneficial effect.

The importance of the reactions produced in India by concessions made by the Government or the Viceroy or the Governor of a province often amaze students of Indian affairs. Certainly, in this matter of the Irwin-Gandhi settlement there seems to be very little reason for the unanimous jubilation expressed in connection with it in Indian political circles. On all material points of real importance Lord Irwin had had his way, and it would be naturally expected that Congress would be dissatisfied, no matter what other sections might be pleased. The truth is that Indian politics are more a matter of psychology than are politics in most other countries. As long as Indians feel that they are being treated not only fairly, but as equals, they are not difficult people to deal with, and Lord Irwin's unprecedented action had given the Indian public the strongest possible proof that he, at any rate, was not going to allow any false notions of prestige to stand in the way of his dealing with any of their leaders on terms which they could accept without any possible feeling of resentment. This certainly was one of the main contributing causes of the satisfaction with which the settlement was received. Another was the universal weariness with the unrest and the bloodshed and the crippling economic losses which had accompanied the civil disobedience movement of the past twelve months. At once, peace descended over the greater part of India, not, it is true, to be entirely unbroken for very long or to be unaccompanied by developments which the Government could not but view with grave disquiet, and which, less than a year later, were to send Mr. Gandhi back to jail again and inaugurate a new period of unrest. Nevertheless, for the time being there

was perished. But India was not by any means out of the wood yet. The agreement had still to be ratified by the All-India National Congress in its postponed session at Karachi at the end of March, and thousands of young hotheads were assembled there. They, at any rate, were not pleased with the agreement, and, by a malign twist of fate, the execution of the murderer, Bhagat Singh, the man who had killed young Mr Saunders of the police in Lahore, and who had thrown the bombs into the Assembly, was fixed for the very time when the delegates to the Congress session were actually in Karachi. This was a very formidable obstacle indeed to Mr Gandhi's attempts to get his settlement accepted by Congress, and it was very widely believed that he would fail. Also, the settlement had not been received with any favour by large and influential sections of thought in England, and on 12th March, in a debate on Supply, the whole question of the settlement was raised in the House of Commons when a powerful opposition was developed by the Conservative Party. As before, in the case of the debate on Lord Irwin's announcement regarding dominion status, this Parliamentary debate produced a very important effect in India, and Mr Gandhi, on 19th March, secured another interview with Lord Irwin to voice his fears and doubts in connection with this debate and with the execution of Bhagat Singh. But, clearly, there was nothing more to be done by the Viceroy. He was prepared to implement his side of the pact, and there was nothing for it but that Mr Gandhi should go to Karachi and do his best, as he obviously meant to do, to carry out his side. So, to Karachi Mr Gandhi went, where he found himself for once the object of a hostile

demonstration by those who, in the past, had held him as saint and deliverer and had been proud to perform the most menial offices for him. Indeed, when he arrived at Karachi towards the end of March there was even some fear that he might be subjected to physical violence from the excited young men who were beside themselves with excitement and emotion at the execution of Bhagat Singh. However, as things turned out, their part in the proceedings was no more than that of 'confused noise off,' and in the end the Subjects Committee and the session of Congress itself ratified the settlement and authorised Mr. Gandhi to proceed to England to represent Congress at the Round Table Conference. But they did so on conditions, and the effective resolution passed by Congress ran as follows

'This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal, and in particular, so as to give the nation control over the Army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right to either party to end the partnership at will provided, however, that the Congress Delegation will be free to accept such

adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India '.

Clearly, if these words are to be interpreted according to their literal meaning there would seem to be very little point in Mr Gandhi's going to London, for none of the three British parties could possibly agree to the course of events outlined in the resolution. Over Government circles and the more moderate Indian politicians a chill passed as the proceedings of the Karachi session of Congress became known. But the great majority of Indians, knowing Mr Gandhi's notorious susceptibility to the *genius loci*, preferred to ignore these inconvenient conditions of Congress and concentrated only on the fact that the way was now open for Mr Gandhi to go to London. There were many who said that once he got there he would astound everybody, friends and foes alike, by his moderation, and that it was by no means outside the bounds of possibility that he would be able to come to an agreement with the British delegates and Government. Some, indeed, said that Mr Gandhi's mind was of such a singular quality that at the Round Table he might be found insisting on quite negligible and unimportant conditions, whilst conceding all that was of real importance. Mr Gandhi, however, kept his own counsel on these points.

But would he go to the Conference at all? As the days passed and the short Indian spring passed swiftly into summer, doubts on this score became multiplied and grew into a disturbing rumour that Mr Gandhi would certainly not go. For things were going very badly now inside India, in spite of the Irwin Gandhi

pact and the closing down of the active phase of the civil disobedience movement. Once more, as so often in the past when events in India seemed to be on the march towards a happy ending, the insistent realities of the Hindu-Moslem problem blocked the road and called a halt. Bhagat Singh was executed on the evening of 23rd March. The news became known in Cawnpur next morning, and at once the local Congress Committee announced by beat of drum that *hartal*, or cessation of all business activities, should be observed that day in Cawnpur in Bhagat Singh's honour. The Moslems refused to have any *hartal*; speedily, partisans of the two communities were killing each other and destroying each other's property. The trouble spread to outlying neighbourhoods, and, for about a week, the fell work of murder, looting, arson and other violent crimes proceeded until, by about the beginning of April, the police and troops had got the situation completely under control again. But within these few days three hundred recorded murders had been committed, and the official Commission of Enquiry itself stated that the number was known to have been larger, and was probably between four and five hundred. Unofficial accounts, from both sides, have put the number higher still. Hundreds of properties, including shops, houses, mosques and temples, were destroyed by fire during the disturbances, and an immense amount of looting took place. At about the same time as the terror was beginning in Cawnpur, the President of the All-India National Congress was entering Karachi. Frenzied bands of youths met him with the news of Bhagat Singh's death, but the grimmer news of Cawnpur came later in the

day, breaking harshly on ears that were only too loath to hear it. But it was true enough, and every day increased the tale of deaths, and wounded, and burnings, until, far away in Karachi, it looked as though half the Ganges Valley must become aflame. Yet, in spite of the presence of this dread two-handed engine at the door of the Congress *pandal*, the academic resolutions on independence were framed, and meaningless phrases about Indian unity were coined whilst the bitter gloss on them was being written in Cawnpur and its satellite villages.

It has been a law of Indian politics during the past ten years that every period of agitation, every stiffening of the demands, and every widening of the objectives of the Congress Party, has been accompanied by a corresponding stiffening of Moslem claims and a similar widening of Moslem objectives. From the working of this law there has been no escape, and the events of the summer of 1931 illustrate this dictum with peculiar force. For, after Cawnpur—Kashmir. In this outlying State, which includes within its borders some of the most beautiful, and, also, some of the least known parts of the earth's surface, trouble had been latent for long enough. The vast majority of the people are Moslems, the ruler and the ruling caste and cliques are Hindus. From time to time, travellers or British officials who have worked in Kashmir, and notably Sir Henry Lawrence, have told of the disabilities under which Moslem subjects of the State labour. But Kashmir is far away, and the Kashmiri Moslems, on the whole, are a peaceful, timid folk living, many of them, on the rim of the eternal snows in remote glens of which the geography books



rigorously guarded by police and troops. Hindu India was aflame also, and wild stories of an alleged separatist conspiracy to gain possession of Kashmir as a valuable part of the projected Moslem State in the north of India gained credence.

All over the country the events of Cawnpur and Kashmir, and lesser events elsewhere, galvanised Moslems into a fury of activity. Hundreds of meetings, in which Moslem feeling hardened all the time, were held throughout the summer months in towns, in villages, and in mosques, and their political demands assumed ultimately the sanctity of a creed which it was impious not to hold. And not only on the side of Hindu-Moslem relations was the Indian situation deteriorating in these months. There was a disposition on the part of local Congress workers to view the Irwin-Gandhi settlement as a truce during which it was quite legitimate to make preparations for future hostilities. Congress emissaries sped busily throughout the towns and the countryside, warning the people that they must be ready to take up the fight at a moment's notice. Where the activities of these men led to open breaches of the law, the Government officers had to take action, and this, in turn, led to allegations from the side of Congress that the Government were not keeping the pact. From the side of the Princes came ominous rumours that some of them were weakening in their allegiance to the federal ideal. The rumours became certainty with the publication by the Maharaja of Patiala of a manifesto which, it was known, had the support of other Princes, in which he *formally announced his preference for a scheme intermediate between the present system and an*

All-India Federation He would like to see the Princes themselves organised for corporate action in certain matters, particularly in their relations with British India, before he was prepared to enter into the sort of federation outlined at the Round Table Conference. This was serious, because the Maharaja of Patiala had lately been Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and might be Chancellor again at any time. His alternative scheme was certain of wide support from the Princes. Thus, the political front all over India was crumbling, and the omens were not good for the second session of the Round Table Conference, which was due to open in September.

While all this was going on, Lord Irwin's term of office came to an end, and he left India in April. Up to the last, he endeavoured to persuade His Majesty's Government to send a deputation of British representatives at the Round Table Conference to India, to keep the work of the Conference in active being, and to stabilise the Indian position by letting the people see with their own eyes that the Round Table Conference really was at work, and by giving them an opportunity of understanding the scope of that work. The Government Party in England were willing to meet his wishes, but it proved impossible to get the assent of the Conservative and Liberal leaders. Nobody can say, of course, what effect on Indian opinion the presence of such a delegation would have had, but it is certain that all responsible leaders in the country believed that the result could be no other than beneficial. It is quite certain, also, that a visit to India in the early part of 1931 would have proved a good education in Indian affairs for those British delegates who had no first-hand

knowledge of them, and this certainly would have been of high value later on. Nevertheless, disappointed though he was in this attempt, Lord Irwin left India knowing that his policy had been justified in its essential features by the action of both Indian and British representatives at the Round Table Conference, and by the results of the Conference itself up to that time.

But as the summer wore on, the situation in India continued to deteriorate. Public opinion swung about in the most extraordinary manner, and nobody could predict its changes from one week to another. But, on the whole, it tended steadily to assume more and more sympathy with extremist views. Over parts of the Bombay Presidency and the United Provinces agrarian trouble grew to dangerous proportions and was skilfully fostered by Congress agents. Terrorist activities extended far beyond their previous limits, and Colonel Simpson, of the Indian Medical Service, and Mr Garlick, a Sessions judge, were both shot dead in Calcutta whilst at their work. The attempt which had been made to murder the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, while he was attending a function at the Punjab University in Lahore some months before, was paralleled at a college of the Bombay University in Poona, when Sir John Hotson, the Acting-Governor of Bombay, was fired at by a student. Preparations for blowing up important public buildings in Chittagong were discovered at the last moment, and a widespread plot to murder Europeans in one part of Bengal was also revealed. Bomb outrages occurred in various places throughout the country, and others were frustrated by the ceaseless

vigilance of the police. Even the blindest and most prejudiced could not fail to perceive whither some sections of the Youth Movement were going, and, even in political circles not noted for their moderation, there was genuine fear and condemnation of these murderous activities.

Nothing could better open the eyes of people abroad to the realities and the difficulties of the political situation in India during these months than a study of the Indian press, and particularly the vernacular press. There are some thousands of these papers all over India, and in the vernacular, no matter which vernacular it may be, vituperation and incitement are more coarse, more direct, and more brutal than they are in English. These are the papers whose words reach the masses, for they are read by literate passengers in railway trains to their illiterate companions, and by schoolmasters and other educated people to groups of listeners in the villages and towns. They are frequently illustrated by cartoons of an almost inconceivable crudeness, but which often have a tremendous effect on the simple uneducated people who see them. Of all the instruments of agitation at work, none exceeds in range of action and effectiveness of appeal the vernacular press. It is difficult to see what the Government can do to combat its activities, for long before the officials can even see the newspapers, much less take any steps to counter their misrepresentations, the damage has been done. It is a common allegation that the Indian Government censors and controls the Indian press. This is absolutely untrue, except when a special ordinance is passed for the purpose during periods of unrest, when the vernacular press, or even,

some of the Indian papers which are printed in English, are directly inciting to murder and other forms of violence. One of the first-fruits of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms was the repeal of the old Press Act, under which newspapers were required to deposit security which could be forfeited in case of such gross misdemeanours as those now under discussion. The execution of Bhagat Singh was an occasion for an outpouring of rancorous hatred against the Government and everything British on the part of a large section of the Indian press, particularly the vernacular press, which is surely without parallel. A survey of the newspapers during 1931, particularly from the end of March onwards, does indeed reveal the existence of a constant danger to the peace of India in the unremitting inflammatory propaganda which goes on.

Lord Irwin had not been long away from India when Mr. Gandhi began to express doubts as to his ability to attend the Round Table Conference. At first he said that he would not attend unless a Hindu-Moslem agreement had first been reached, but here he found himself in an unsound tactical position. He could be, and was, in fact, asked to try to effect a settlement himself, but he had burned his fingers too badly in 1924 in a similar attempt. He knew, better perhaps than anybody else, that in the prevailing circumstances there was not the slightest chance of success for anything he could do. In fact, the Moslems would probably not have entered into any Conference presided over by him, because they were thoroughly distrustful of the tiny handful of the Moslems who still belonged to the All-India National Congress. They believed that the Congress leaders meant to use these

men, if possible, to split the unity of the Moslem front, and, secondly, to prove to the world that Moslems themselves were divided on the subject of the fundamental claims and safeguards which they had put forward. Mr Gandhi's second position was a much better one from the point of view of tactics. He next said that he would not go to London until the Government ceased, as he alleged, to break the pact by their action against the activities of Congress workers. Lord Willingdon, the new Viceroy, thus found his task at the beginning of his viceroyalty one of vast difficulty and complexity. He, however, carried on whole-heartedly the policy and methods of Lord Irwin, and after Mr Gandhi's sweeping demands for enquiry into his allegations had been narrowed down to an investigation by a Government officer into the allegations made against officials of the Bombay Government, in respect of their actions in parts of the Gujerat district where agrarian trouble had been most bitter, he decided at the eleventh hour to go to the Conference.

In September, the Indian delegates to the Round Table Conference, increased by the presence of Mr Gandhi and the veteran Nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and the colourful personality of Mrs Naidu, a poetess and orator of distinction, assembled once more in London. But they assembled in a different spirit from that which had animated them a year before. The gloom of the events of the preceding months in India hung over them, and the England to which they came was not the England of 1930. Her own financial troubles weighed heavily on her, and whilst the delegates were still arriving her resounding fall from the gold standard shook the whole nation.

India had been thrust well into the background by the events nearer home, and the obvious imminence of a General Election still further detracted from the importance of the Indian Conference, and the interest and attention paid to it. But, above all, the Conference opened in an atmosphere of doubt. Doubt as to the intentions of the Princes, doubt as to Mr Gandhi's attitude and, above all, far more crushing and paralysing than anything else, doubt as to the possibility of finding any solution to the communal problem. The Conference opened in this shadow of doubt—it closed in the deeper gloom of certainty. For, at the Conference, it became clear that the Maharaja of Patiala had found support for his alternative to federation, and the rulers of the important States of Indore and Dholpur made it known that they agreed with him. The representatives of other States were cautious even to the verge of suspicion, and the protracted discussions over the scheme of federal finance, which occupied a very great part of the proceedings at this second session, revealed only too clearly the size and strength of the obstacles in the way of federation. Mr Gandhi confounded optimists and pessimists alike. The optimists because he never showed any desire or intention to approach the problem of All-India federation in a practical spirit. The pessimists because his intransigence and irrelevance went far beyond even their gloomiest forebodings. Even after the most complete and unambiguous refutation of his claim by Sir Muhammad Shafi, speaking for the Moslems, and Dr Ambedkar, speaking for the Depressed Classes, Mr Gandhi continued to assert that the Congress represented the whole of India,

and, therefore, that the Congress mandate with which he had come armed was the unanimous demand of a united India. He therefore pressed this mandate continuously, which was no other than the resolution of the Karachi Conference quoted earlier in this chapter, and, in spite of the indignant denials of other delegates, he continued his bland asseveration that, as the chosen representative of the All-India National Congress, he spoke for the 'dumb millions' of India. After a time, the cleavage between Mr. Gandhi and even the other Hindu delegates became open, and these others had perforce to cease their attempts to work in conjunction with him.

But throughout all the proceedings of the Conference the communal issue dominated the scene, and the Moslems dominated the communal issue. By this time they were solidly together. Mr. Gandhi and Congress had asked for a Moslem to be nominated to the Conference to represent the 'Nationalist Moslem' point of view, that is, the point of view of those who were prepared to give up the communal electorate and to make other concessions in view of reciprocal concessions from the Hindu side. A noted lawyer, Sir Ali Imam, one of the ablest men in his community in the whole of India, a powerful debater and speaker, was accordingly invited by the Viceroy to represent the Nationalist Moslem point of view. But things never came to this stage of discussion of Moslem or other minority safeguards in the Conference. It was perfectly clear, even at the first meeting of the renewed Federal Structure Sub-Committee, that the air was charged with electricity and all the delegates realised that any open discussion of the minorities question



would precipitate a crisis which could only end in a breakdown of the work of the Conference. Only the two crucial committees of the whole Conference were summoned to London in September, namely, the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, and the Minorities Sub-Committee. It was the work of this latter sub-committee which had to be the foundation of the work of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, and, indeed, of the work of the whole Conference. Yet throughout the whole of this second session the Minorities Committee met only four times, and on each occasion its meetings were hardly more than formal. The work which it ought to have done was attempted outside, and, at the outset, Mr Gandhi agreed, on request, to call certain leaders of the Minority communities together and see if he could come to any agreement with them. He twice requested the adjournment of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee in order to give him time to get on with this task, and, as a matter of fact, the Committee was adjourned from the 5th to the 13th of October. But it was all in vain. No agreement could be reached, and, indeed, no agreement arrived at in this way could have been valid, because Dr Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha representative, who could speak for the vast majority of orthodox Hindus with far more authority than Mr Gandhi, took no part in these discussions, and let it be known that any arrangement made at them would have to conform to the conditions which he regarded as necessary. But the leaders of the Minority communities, excepting the Sikhs and one of the Indian Christian representatives, failing to come to any agreement with Mr Gandhi, made a settlement among themselves. The rock on

Hindus and Sikhs, was included. The presentation of this memorandum was a prelude to a regular spate of such documents in which the representatives of a number of separate communal and provincial interests presented their points of view and their demands. Of further attempts to reach an agreement between Hindus and the Minorities communities there were none.

As the session went on, hopes and expectations gradually dwindled. With exemplary patience the Indian delegates sat through more or less formal meetings of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, while the election campaign and the election itself took place. They spent days discussing the Report of the Federal Finance Sub-Committee, but could carry the contents of that document no further. No sketch of a federal financial system had emerged, but, at any rate, the matters in issue between the States and British India had been fairly well defined and unanimous support had been given to proposals for the appointment of two committees to explore certain sides of the very thorny problem still further. But after the election Mr. Gandhi and others of the Indian delegates grew restive. Their British colleagues of the House of Commons were now able to come back to the discussions, and, although every one of the representatives of the Labour Party, except Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Thomas, had lost their seats, the new Government rightly decided to ask them all to retain their membership of the Conference. Could the big problem of the kind and degree of responsibility for the proposed All-India Federal Government now be tackled? The situation around the Table was not promising, for the Minorities were standing closely together and were in

fighting mood. As the Hindu delegates surveyed the new Government and House of Commons a chill of doubt and suspicion crept over them. Were these the sort of people to listen sympathetically to their claims, and were not Mr Churchill and Lord Lloyd, their two foremost antagonists, members of the triumphant Conservative Party and men of great influence therein? They waited apprehensively for a confirmation of their fears in just that mood which makes rumour most effective. And, of course, there were rumours of all sorts which speedily condensed into the rumour, broadcast, unfortunately, by an important morning newspaper, that Sir Samuel Hoare and his colleagues, confident in their strength, were going to offer India nothing more than provincial autonomy of the type proposed by the Simon Report. At the Centre, the rumour continued, there was to be no change. A wave of anger swept through the ranks of the Hindu delegates. They would have none of this, and said so with no unnecessary or ambiguous terms in a manifesto to the Prime Minister, which they also issued to the press. Inside the Conference this matter was hotly debated. Mr Wedgwood Benn and Mr Lees Smith strenuously supported Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Sastri, and other colleagues who had signed the manifesto, and insisted that the Government's intentions should be made known. Lord Reading, however, reduced the incident to its proper proportions by asking if it were necessary to take newspaper rumours so seriously, and by announcing that, as far as he and his party were concerned, there was not a shred of truth in the rumour. Sir Samuel Hoare also said that the Government had come to no such decision.

as was alleged, and the storm, which had been sharp and dangerous for a short time, subsided. But this was by no means the end of the Conference troubles, for now the Moslems announced that they positively refused to discuss any matters connected with responsibility or further reforms at the Centre until Minority claims and safeguards had been settled. They proved absolutely invincible by argument, and, although they agreed not to leave the Conference if such matters were discussed, they adhered steadfastly to their determination to take no part in the discussions themselves. It was clear that the end of the Conference had come. Some of the basic factors in the degree of responsibility to be given to the Federal Government were discussed, but, on the whole, the position as it was left at the end of the first session was not materially altered. The British spokesmen adhered to their earlier positions, and so, in the main, did the representatives of the Princes and the various British Indian communities and interests. Mr. Gandhi found himself unable to make any practical suggestions, and continued to plough his lonely Congress furrow. Not until the very end of the session was the whole Conference able to be summoned, and then it was only for the purpose of enduring a plethora of speeches in a plenary session, which became momentarily famous on account of the number of speeches delivered and culminated in an all-night sitting. Many of the sentiments of the earlier days of the first session were voiced, but the spirit which had animated these earlier utterances, though it was still present in some quarters, was nevertheless feeble and discouraged. For the Moslems, Sir Muhammad Shafi and Mr. Jinnah spoke

first, and after them, Dr Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a rising Moslem leader from the United Provinces, and Mr A H Ghuznavi, the Bengali veteran, robustly restated the Moslem position and urged the Government to begin its new reforming programme by bringing into being the institutions of provincial autonomy forthwith. Three other speeches stand out in high relief in this last plenary session, those of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Sastri and Sir Hubert Carr. It is hardly too much to say that these three speeches alone would have made it worth while to hold the Conference, for they showed brilliantly that spirit of compromise and that understanding of points of view other than their own which are the most necessary, and, indeed, the only force to drive India onward to the goal of national unity.

As before, the end of the session came with the Prime Minister's announcement of the policy of His Majesty's Government. In some sections of the British and Indian press it had been assumed that the Conference would end in mere futility. This was not Mr MacDonald's intention or the intention of the Government of which he is the head. Almost in the first sentences of his statement the Prime Minister repeated the pledges contained in his previous statement of 19th January 1931, and reaffirmed the belief of His Majesty's Government in an All-India federation as offering the only helpful solution of India's constitutional problem. This objective would be pursued unswervingly, and the British Government would do everything in its power to attain it. He spoke seriously of the communal deadlock, and showed how it was the heart of the whole situation.

‘ If you cannot present us with a settlement acceptable to all parties,’ he said, ‘ His Majesty’s Government would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme, for they are determined that even this disability shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress. This would mean that His Majesty’s Government would have to settle for you, not only your problems of representation, but also to decide as wisely and justly as possible what checks and balances the Constitution is to contain to protect Minorities from an unrestricted and tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through majority power. I desire to warn you that if the Government have to supply even temporarily this part of your Constitution which you are unable to supply for yourselves, and though it will be our care to provide the most ample safeguards for Minorities so that none of them need feel that they have been neglected, it will not be a satisfactory way of dealing with this problem. Let me also warn you that if you cannot come to an agreement on this amongst yourselves, it will add considerably to the difficulties of any Government here which shares our views of an Indian Constitution, and it will detract from the place which that Constitution will occupy amongst those of other nations. I therefore beg of you once more to take further opportunities to meet together and present us with an agreement ’

Nevertheless, Mr MacDonald was able to announce that the British Government meant to go ahead without delay, and he proposed to nominate a small Working Committee of the Conference to remain in being in India and keep in effective touch with the home

Government and with the Viceroy. He further said that he intended to set up at once a committee to investigate and advise on the revision of the franchise and constituency, and also the two financial sub-committees which had been recommended by the Sub-Committee of the Federal Structure Committee. One announcement of his gave a special pleasure to the Moslems, and, indeed, to many of the other delegates who were not Moslems. This was the decision already reached to turn the North-West Frontier Province into a Governor's Province without delay, but with due regard to the peculiar conditions of the frontiers as the key point in the defence of India. Mr. Gandhi, in proposing a vote of thanks to the Prime Minister, said that he would have to take time to consider the statement, and it might be that he would be forced once more into active opposition to the Government. But the momentary gloom which his speech cast over the gathering was dispelled by the genial and robust Sir Abdul Quayum, who, brimming over with delight at what he had just heard concerning the frontier, quickly brought back the meeting to good humour and a certain lightness of heart, and in that spirit the delegates dispersed once more. Even the Nationalist Hindus felt they had gained a victory in those words of the Prime Minister's statement which, in effect, announced that no change should be made in the Constitution of India except by one all embracing statute covering the whole field. That is to say, the British Government had no intention of making a beginning on the new Constitution of India by introducing provincial autonomy without corresponding changes at the Centre. By implication, the Prime Minister's words also meant that if Hindu

opinion on the subject of provincial autonomy, as a first instalment of wider reforms, should change, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to go on with it. But for the present, at any rate, the Hindus felt that they had got the bogey of mere provincial autonomy behind them, and so they also experienced a certain modified rapture.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DARKEST HOUR

BUT, meanwhile, things had been going very badly indeed in India. With Mr. Gandhi's departure from India such control as he could exercise over the Working Committee of Congress and the innumerable Congress agents and organisations scattered throughout the provinces, was greatly weakened if not destroyed. Once more the meetings, at which the hearers were warned to be ready for the coming struggle for freedom, were held in innumerable places all over India, and once more the Government officials, and particularly the police, felt the steady surge of rising agitation. 'Incidents' began to occur, followed by the usual reeriminations and further incidents. The murder clubs in Bengal grew in strength and daring, and at the beginning of December occurred one of the most revolting crimes in the whole blood-stained history of Indian terrorism. This was the murder of Mr. Stevens by two young Bengali schoolgirls, an event which sent a shiver of disgust and repulsion throughout those parts of the world where men believe that those who have not the courage to do their own dirty work should not ask women to do it for them. But this crime, and the later attempted murder of Sir Stanley Jackson, Governor of Bengal, by another girl student, are no more than the logical outcome of the spirit and tactics which could employ women to march at the head of

unruly or riotous mobs in the knowledge that their presence would seriously embarrass the police, and, to a large extent, protect the men sheltering behind them. Pact or no pact, the Government refused to hold its hand from the terrorist movement, because by the end of the year the lives of numbers of its officers in Bengal were in daily jeopardy. Even non-official Europeans who had been outspoken in calling for the suppression of terrorist activities were not immune, as the attempted murder of Mr Villiers, of the European Association, showed.

Bengal and the terrorists were not the only dark spots in the Indian scene by any means. Once more agrarian unrest was rife, particularly in the United Provinces, and parts of the Bombay Presidency and Bombay City lived in a whirl of excitement. Kashmir had flared up again, and the Moslems all over India were whipped into a state bordering on frenzy by the wild rumours which were flying about of atrocities perpetrated on their co religionists. Day by day, telegrams poured into St James's Palace for the Moslem delegates to the Round Table Conference, and the doings in Kashmir were a strong influence in stiffening their backs in London. It was even feared, at one time, that there might be a clash between the militant Moslem bands, going from the Punjab and further afield to the help of their fellows in Kashmir, and the British troops, who by this time had had to go to the assistance of the State Government. Fortunately, however, the traditional good temper of the British Tommies and the fact that they were received by the Kashmir Moslems with wild rejoicings put this danger out of the way. It would, indeed, have been a disaster of the first magnitude for the peace of all India had

shirt movement than about most of the recent developments in Indian politics. The Indian frontier is remote from the main stream of Indian life, and its conditions and affairs are a sealed book to all, whether Indian or British, who have not had personal experience of the frontier people and frontier life. There are no newspapers on the frontier, and news of what is happening there does not spread easily throughout India, and, when it does, it is very often found to be garbled and inaccurate. It is usually said that the red-shirt movement is an off-shoot of the All-India National Congress. It is true that the leader of the movement, the picturesque Abdul Ghaffur Khan, has used the Congress organisation, and particularly the prestige of Mr. Gandhi, to support him in his struggle with the local authorities. Congress slogans and Congress funds also were found very useful. But, essentially, the red shirt movement is a Moslem nationalist-religious movement. The eyes of the red-shirts, and certainly of their leader, are not turned to India, but westward to Afghanistan and their kinsmen of the frontier tribes. Abdul Ghaffur Khan himself is a man of a type long familiar to frontier officers under the title of 'Talib ul Ilm,' i.e. 'seeker after knowledge.' These 'seekers after knowledge' are students of Islamic theology, and are destined to become mullahs, or priests. To the vast majority of the men of this class the British are just infidels and nothing more, and in the past they have provided most of the religious fanatics who, in the earlier days of our rule on the frontier, used to ensure their swift and certain passage to paradise by murdering a British officer. To such men as these it is a religious duty to

seek to bring about the rule of Islam wherever power is held by 'infidels,' and to this day, the colony of Hindustani fanatics, away across the northern border in Swat, reminds us of the days when such men as these could give battle to British forces and believe that they could expel them from the frontier marches. A little way across the north western border of the Peshawar district lives the Haji of Turangzai, who has been for years a thorn in the side of the Frontier Government and is implacably hostile to the infidel Government in the old dour fashion of the Moslem Puritans. After receiving a smattering of education in Peshawar in his early youth, Abdul Ghaffur Khan abandoned his Western education and came under the influence of the Haji, and from that time onwards he has been prominent in any anti-British, that is to say, anti infidel, activities which have taken place. The whole stress must be laid on the words 'anti infidel,' for there is not the slightest doubt that any non-Islamic Government would be met by the same bitter, implacable hatred from the side of Abdul Ghaffur Khan and all—and they are the majority among these frontier tribes—who think like him. The red shirt movement, then, although vested with Congress trappings and supported to some extent by the Congress organisation, is a genuine Pathan Nationalist religious movement, having as its ultimate objective the establishment of an Islamic kingdom under an orthodox Moslem ruler. Afghanistan is the natural nucleus of such a kingdom, and, by virtue of being adjacent to the lands which would form part of this kingdom, Kashmir would undoubtedly become one of its ultimate objectives, although there is no reason

for believing that at present this contingency is in the minds of any except a very few Moslems. - This explanation of the red-shirt movement, however, does show the importance of Kashmir now in present, and still more, in future Indian politics.

By the end of 1931 the Red Shirts had become definitely menacing. The peace and safety of the frontier were in danger, and therewith the security of all India. Mr. Gandhi's support of Abdul Ghaffur Khan and his activities is an excellent example of the light-hearted way in which he handles issues which he has no possible means of understanding. Because the red-shirt movement brought a virile element into anti-Government agitation, an element which hitherto Congress has never even hoped to be able to approach, Mr. Gandhi brought all his influence to its support, knowing nothing of what a smash on the frontier would mean to millions of people there and in the adjacent parts of India. But the Government of India did know this, and the inclusion of the frontier in the pact was a mistake. We have seen what vital stakes Lord Irwin was playing for in his conversations with Mr. Gandhi, and the history of these fateful years has sufficiently proved the soundness of his judgment and the rightness of his policy in undertaking the action, which he did. But it would have been better had the exclusion of the frontier from any agreement that might be reached been made a prior condition to the conversations. In the end, the red-shirt movement has had to be suppressed, but, before it was suppressed, it brought the Frontier Province, and with it India, to the very verge of calamity. Moreover, the suppression of the movement has proved to be a long, difficult and

anxious business, and it has left behind it smouldering embers and plenty of fuel which will again be kindled into fire. The significance of the reaction of Moslem India to the closing down of the red-shirt movement should not be overlooked. We can discount the stories of atrocities committed in suppressing the movement, for these are the ordinary stock-in-trade of Congress propaganda, and are exactly the same as those alleged on many previous occasions. Stock forms could be kept for these alleged atrocities, for they are practically identical, wherever they are said to occur, on the frontier, or in Bombay, or in evictions for non-payment of taxes, and so on, in any other part of India. But, apart from the fact that stories like these always find many people to believe them, there remains the important circumstance that the red-shirt movement was a movement of a sort which could and did attract Moslem sympathies everywhere. This is the reason why such bitter resentment has been aroused in many parts of India by the news of the crushing of the movement and, early in 1932, at a meeting of the All-India Moslem League, this resentment was voiced, and for a time caused grave anxiety as to the future co-operation of important sections of the Indian Moslems with the work of the Round Table Conference.

Such had been the march of events and the stir of feeling in India throughout the last part of 1931 and the early part of 1932, including the time when the Round Table Conference was sitting in London. Even before the end of the year and while the Round Table Conference was still sitting, the Government of India had once more to take extraordinary action to counter the growing tide of unrest and civil disobedience in

different parts of India. There were districts in Bengal where the Government found it impossible, with its ordinary powers, to guarantee the safety of its officers, and in quick succession two Ordinances were issued to enable Sir Stanley Jackson and his Government to take terrorism by the throat. It was high time, for the outer fringes of Congress were beginning to touch the terrorists, and it is, above all things, necessary that the Government should rigorously insist on the isolation of the murder gangs from all organised and lawful politics. On the frontier, Congress was trying to use the red-shirt movement for its own ends. But they were like children playing with a Mills grenade. They had not the slightest conception of the deadly power and the danger to themselves of the thing they were touching.

The promulgation of the Bengal Ordinances naturally exerted a big influence on the Indian delegates assembled in London, and the first question asked was, 'What will India do?' Mr. Gandhi did nothing at the moment, but he was deeply shaken, and, taken in conjunction with his disappointment at the course of events at the Conference, the Government of India's new action gave rise to very grave doubts as to his attitude when he got back. In India, Congress was very restive but could take no definite action while Mr. Gandhi was away. It was not a happy India to which the delegates were returning. By the time they reached Bombay all the materials for another outbreak of trouble were collected and were about to be lit. It is possible that Mr. Gandhi might have been able to keep the Working Committee of Congress in hand had Lord Willingdon seen him and discussed the Bengal and other Ordinances with him, but it is doubtful. Local

becoming more extreme, and it is idle to think that the moderates alone will be able to provide the foundation for the extensive political reforms which it is hoped to rear as the result of the work of the Round Table Conference. From the side of the Princes there has been, since the end of the Conference, mostly silence. It is impossible to say what amount or kind of support for the All-India Federation will ultimately come from them. All the committees which the Prime Minister mentioned in his farewell speech to the delegates on 1st December are now at work, but they are functioning in disheartening circumstances, and, even when their work is finished, who will be the Indian delegates who review it and help to fit it into its place in the great building of the next Indian Constitution? All our experience of the past twenty years tells us that, sooner or later, we shall reach the stage when our work can no longer go forward unless we have all sections of Indian opinion with us. The Government of India for years past has been working with greater and greater strain against ever-growing friction, and yet it seems to be an inexorable decree of fate that any attempt to shift the burden and responsibility of government in India on to Indian shoulders increases divisions and disunity among the people of India themselves. The Consultative Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference, to which the Prime Minister rightly attributed such great importance in his farewell speech, has met, and appears for the moment to have come to a deadlock on the old fatal question of Minority safeguards. The appeal has gone forth from the sub-committee to Mr. MacDonald to compose their differences for them. How can he! This book will have



failed in its purpose if it has not shown that the differences to be solved are deep and fundamental differences, and outside arbitration cannot proceed on the principle of giving each side fifty per cent of its claims. If it does, there will be disaster, for neither side can or will accept it. Compromises will have to be made, and claims will have to be abandoned, but this is for the people concerned to do for themselves. This is a hard saying, but there is no escape from it. It will be infinitely better for India to hold on firmly to the impartiality of the British Raj, no matter how heart-breaking the further postponement of hopes long deferred may be. As things are to-day in India, the British rule is the cement of the whole Indian edifice, and the only substitute for it is agreement between the communities of India themselves. By a strange and arresting coincidence, the same issue of the *London Times* which announced the failure of the Consultative Committee to come to any agreement on the Minorities question contained on the next page the announcement of the promulgation of a new Constitution for Afghanistan. There is no need to reach too much into either the collapse of the hopes of those ardent patriots of the sub-committee who have suffered such grievous disappointment or into the sign of progress in Afghanistan revealed by the announcement of the Constitution. Nevertheless, in their juxtaposition there is a mordant significance which will surely be apparent to those who have followed the course of Hindu-Moslem relations during the fateful years since 1926.

The story of these years is now told. What will be written of the years to come will be its epilogue. For these years have been truly years of destiny for India.

All the participants in what fate holds in store for India, and they are the many Indian communities and the people of Great Britain, have taken irrevocable decisions and done things which cannot be undone. This study has tried to show that mighty forces are at work in India producing the developments which occur so rapidly as to bewilder the observer who has no plan of their swiftly evolving pattern. In a sense, these forces are natural forces and work almost with the irreducible strength of nature. We have seen how Hindus, Moslems, Princes, and, let them not be forgotten, the Depressed Classes, of whom there are forty or fifty millions, have widened the distance which has formerly separated them from others and are marching along diverging roads. But the people of this country have moved also, much further than is generally realised. After the Round Table Conference and after the events of these years the old relationship of control on the one side, and obedient and unquestioning acceptance on the other, can never be restored. We have called India to free and equal consultation with us, and we can never go back on that again. It was pointed out in an earlier chapter how, for over a century, the British and Indians have been altering those conditions of India which made the establishment and maintenance of British rule on the old terms possible. During the last six years, and especially during the last two of these, we have, partly unconsciously and unknowingly, altered the whole basis of our relations with India, changing its basis from subordination to co-partnership.

What is the future in India to be? One of the main purposes of this book has been to show that there is no

easy, simple answer to the reader of Indian politics. The more earnestly we and the leaders of Indian politics strive to adjust the political Constitution of India to the conditions of the present day, both in India and in the world outside, the more strong and active do the disruptive elements in Indian society appear to become. There is no hypocrisy in saying that India, as we know it to-day, is a creation of the British rule, and that to-day its continued existence would be impossible as a political entity in the absence of that rule. This is the plain, blunt truth. But there is hypocrisy, and abundant hypocrisy, in saying that because these disruptive elements exist, therefore India can never grow out of British tutelage. Let that talk and the ideas behind it cease, once and for all. In many ways India has outgrown British tutelage, and most decidedly she has outgrown the old framework of her subordinate Government. It seems to me that the first thing that is necessary is that the British people should understand clearly and simply that they have got to open their minds to the task of co-operating with Indians in solving the problems inherent in the achievement of Indian unity. It may be that the die is already cast and that no united India, as we understand it to day, will ever emerge. It may be that Moslem India in the north and north-west is destined to become a separate Moslem state or part of a Moslem empire. There is no reason yet to believe that this is so, but unless the processes which we have been watching at work are checked and reversed there is good reason for believing that this might be the ultimate outcome. The strong, neutral power of Britain must hold the centrifugal elements of India together until what are

centrifugal become centripetal, and the centre which they seek is Indian nationality. But there is a powerful section of organised Indian opinion which is determined to oppose us at every step, whose avowed policy now is automatic obstruction of every one of our acts, and whose announced determination is to destroy every vestige of political connection between India and Great Britain. How is this intransigence to be overcome? It can be overcome only by detaching from that section those elements which are not irreconcilable, which will work with us once they are persuaded of the genuineness of our intentions. There is only one way in which we can so persuade them, and that is by bringing into being, as quickly as possible, the All-India Federation which would soon be able to take off our shoulders the burden of Indian administration. But we know that in the creation of the Federation, the British people cannot work in advance of conditions in India. Majority and Minority communities in British India and the Indian Princes have to provide the ground and the materials on which they and we may build. The British bring a priceless contribution of absolute impartiality, ripe experience in politics, and the guarantee of peace inside India and outside her frontiers whilst the work of nation-building is continuing. Let our leading statesmen, whether inside or outside the Government of the day, be asked to bend their energies to this task. Let those who have special knowledge and special aptitude for one side or other of the many-sided work be employed. There are those whom the Princes will trust and listen to, there are others whom Moslems know to be their friends, others who have influence with Hindus, and yet others who

can guide the Depressed Classes along the right path. Let all such be brought into counsel and into active work. India is not a side-show. It is one of the biggest problems which face the world this day. We of the British Empire are on the eve of a great forward move in inter-Imperial economic co-operation, and towards a general solidarity of aim and sentiment and purpose. There are great works and great achievements ahead of us in this sphere, and we cannot afford to be hindered in them by a rebellious or unrestful India. The discordant elements in the Indian problem can, and must, be harmonised by us, and this by working in concert, only we and they must give of our very best to this great task. Let us then accept the fateful developments of these years of destiny, realise that India's future is to be worked out in India with the absolute minimum of interference from London, and bring into being now a Government of India strengthened by British and Indian members who have a deep faith in the rightness of what they are doing and who will work for India alone. And, when the moment strikes, such a Government could itself take the fateful step—as Elgin took it in Canada in 1848—to full, responsible self-government. This arrangement would solve the vexed question of status, which is so large a part of Indian discontents to-day, and it would lay at rest controversies concerning the good or bad faith of this country. The Government would be at last truly the Government of India, and surely it would provide the years of peace and co-operation which are necessary to enable us all to bring into being the All-India Federation by the creation of which India, as we know it to-day, will stand or fall.

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